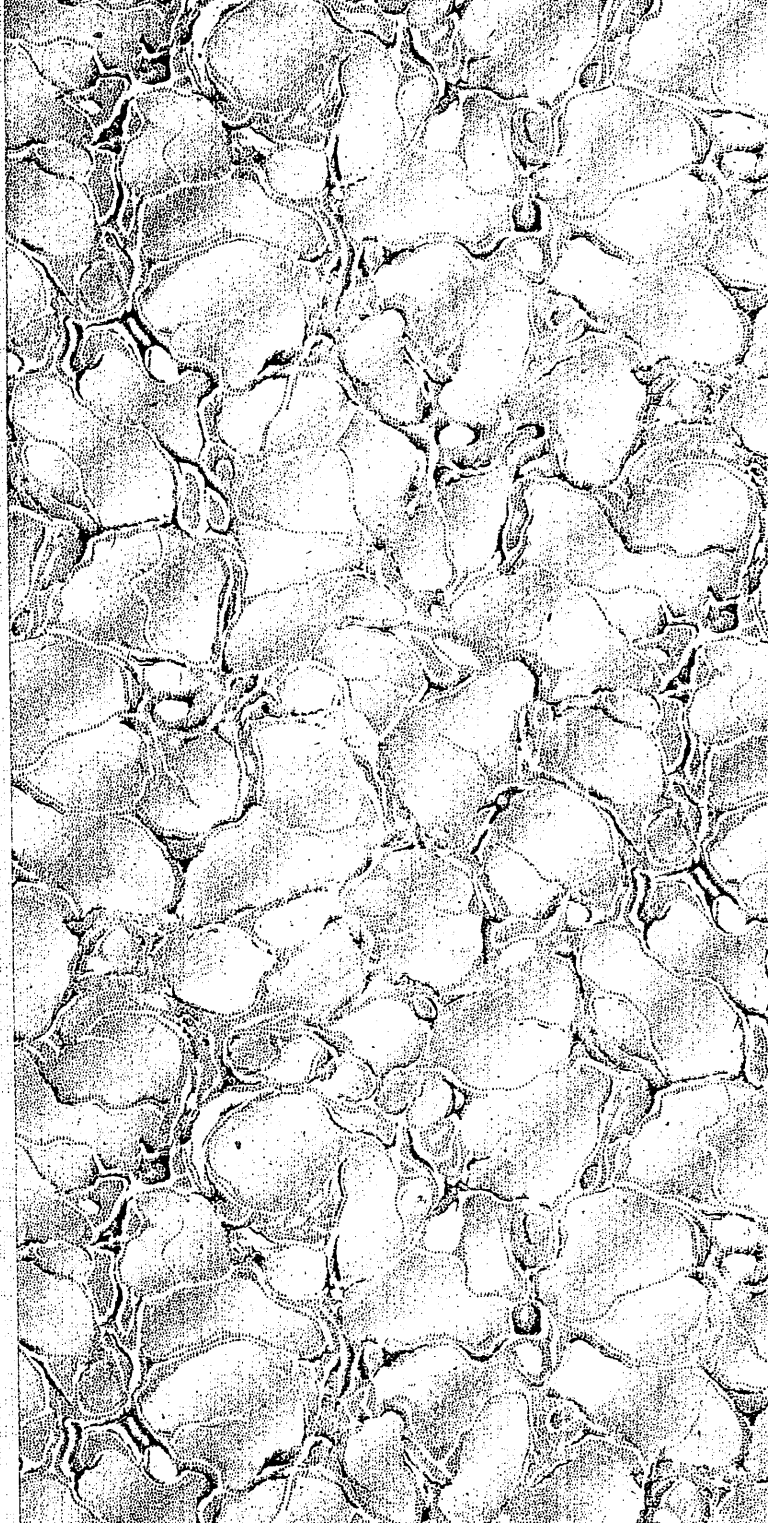


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9.

FOUR SERMONS

ON THE

DOCTRINE OF REGENERATION,

ACCORDING TO

Scripture and the Church of England.

BY

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SACRIFICE," ETC. ETC.

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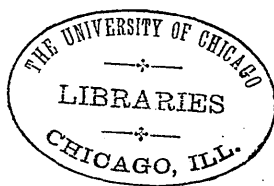
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PREFACE.

PERHAPS it may not be inexpedient to state, that these four Sermons were written *before* the commencement of the present controversy on that subject, and therefore *before* I had read the compositions of those authors who have recently embarked in it on either side of the question. My own opinion was first briefly set forth many years ago in my Bampton's Lectures; and I have not as yet met with any thing which has given me the least reason to suspect its erroneousness. This opinion I afterward at my leisure drew out and defended at large: nor could the discussion be comprehended within a narrower space than that of four long sermons. As my sole object is truth, should I ever feel myself to be manifestly confuted in argument, I trust that I shall never hesitate in acknowledging myself to have been mistaken; but,

with respect to what I have *hitherto* read on the subject, I am constrained to say, that the opinion, which is opposite to my own, does not appear to rest even upon the shadow of a foundation. At all events, however, we may be sure that the interests of truth can never fail to be promoted by discussion.

Long Newton, April 22, 1816.

SERMON I.

ROMANS ii. 28, 29.

He is not a Jew, which is one outwardly; neither is that circumcision, which is outward in the flesh: but he is a Jew which is one inwardly; and circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit, and not in the letter; whose praise is not of men, but of God.

JUSTIFICATION through the alone merits of Jesus Christ gives us a right and title to the kingdom of heaven; but sanctification through the Holy Spirit is no less necessary, in order that we may be duly qualified for our purchased inheritance. These two therefore may well be deemed the two hinges on which turns the whole of Christianity. Either, without the other, is imperfect; for, as sanctification separated from justification, would be a qualification without a right, so justification separated from sanctification would be a right without a qualification. In each genuine servant of the Lord, the two are ever indissolubly united; and what God has joined together, let not man presume to separate.

Sanctification, however, being a condition of soul which no person brings with him originally into the world, must of course have a commencement subsequent to the natural birth: for we are *born* by nature children of wrath; whence it is only afterward that, by the operation of God's most Holy Spirit, we become sanctified children of grace. Now this commencement of sanctification our Lord, by a very obvious and significant metaphor, has thought fit to denominate "regeneration, or a new birth;" because,

when sanctification commences, the subject of it enters into an altogether new life or mode of spiritual existence. And as this conversion from darkness to light and from evil to good is a matter of the most primary importance in the case of every believer, our Lord has further judged it expedient to represent it scenically before our eyes by outward and palpable symbolization. The emblem, accordingly, which he has selected for such a purpose, is pure water, as applied in the sacrament of baptism. Thus, while in one passage he declares that, "except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God;"* in another passage he solemnly enjoins his apostles to "go and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost."† Hence, as our church rightly pronounces a sacrament in general to be "an outward and visible sign of an inward and spiritual grace;" so it specially teaches that "the outward visible sign or form" indeed "in baptism is water," but that "the inward and spiritual grace is a death unto sin and a new birth unto righteousness." Baptism then is the symbol, and regeneration is the grace symbolized: and the due administration of the former is "a mean whereby we may receive" the latter, and "a pledge or earnest" on the part of God "to assure us of it."

Thus far perhaps all Christians are agreed, who admit the literal use of baptism to be a divine obligatory institution: but here an important question arises, on which there has not always been an equal unanimity of sentiment. "Does the inward grace of regeneration *always* accompany the outward sign of baptism; or is it possible, that either may subsist without the other?"

They, who hold the latter of these opinions, contend that, as baptism is professedly the sign only of regeneration, they can find no ground for believing, either from Scripture or from reason or from experience or from

* John iii. 5.

† Matt. xxviii. 19.

analogy, that the grace symbolized invariably accompanies its appointed symbol. They pretend not to deny, that such may sometimes be the case; because, as sanctification must needs commence at some definite moment, it may doubtless commence in the very article of baptism as well as at any other time: but they are constrained to state, that as yet they have seen no sufficient proof that such is the case *always*. Hence they are led to maintain, that regeneration may occasionally take place *before* baptism, occasionally *at* baptism, and occasionally *after* baptism: and they are willing to believe that both Scripture and experience, to say nothing of reason and analogy, will bear them out in this view of the subject.

They, on the contrary, who hold the former of these opinions, contend, if I mistake not, that baptism and regeneration are absolutely inseparable. They assert, that, not only is baptism the outward sign of regeneration, but also the procuring cause of it. Hence they teach, that, where baptism is, there infallibly is regeneration; and, where baptism is not, there assuredly is no regeneration. All the baptized therefore are regenerate; and, conversely, all the unbaptized are unregenerate. To look, consequently, for any spiritual regeneration *subsequent* to baptism is plainly nugatory: for every baptized person, being *ipso facto* regenerate, cannot a second time be born again, though from his lapses into actual sin he may have need of frequent renovations. The advocates of this opinion strenuously contend, that it is the genuine doctrine of the Church of England: and they are very apt, with what controversial equity I stop not to inquire, though apparently from not having themselves sufficiently considered the subject in all its various tendencies, they are very apt gratuitously to charge their opponents with an unwarrantable or even an heretical departure from the avowed sentiments of that church, and not unfrequently to intimate (doubtless by way of satisfactorily accounting for the alleged fact of this departure) that they are lament-

ably deficient in the highly useful qualification of common sense.

Yet, notwithstanding this confident and somewhat indecorous assumption of superiority, the opinion which they espouse, may not be quite so clearly established as they imagine. At least, as the cause of truth will ever be promoted by discussion, there can be no harm in entering somewhat at large into the subject : or indeed, I should rather say, the subject ought to be fully treated.

The assertion, that a certain outward application to the human body invariably produces a certain inward effect upon the human mind; that, the moment the hand of a priest sprinkles water upon the catechumen or plunges him wholly beneath its surface, reciting at the same time a formula in which our Lord has directed the rite of baptism to be administered, at that identical moment his soul always experiences the commencement of sanctification and becomes radically changed in its every faculty ; in fine, (for this is the sum and substance of the matter,) that God should have been pleased to confer, without any exception to the general rule, upon a particular outward action of his appointed ministers, or perhaps (as some have contended with the Church of Rome) of any baptized Christian where a priest cannot be procured, a miraculous potency of affecting the very soul itself through the fleshly vail with which it is shrouded : an assertion like this, so extraordinary, so little agreeable to common analogy, so portentously wonderful under whatever aspect it be viewed, manifestly requires the highest possible degree of proof in order to its being rationally admitted.

I say not, indeed, that it advances an impossibility ; for with God, no doubt, all things which involve not an absolute contradiction, are possible ; and he *may* invariably communicate to a priest's external application of water a wondrous internal power over the human mind. But this I say, that, to admit the truth of so very extraordinary an assertion without the most ample proof of its being

well founded, is no better than an act of superstition worthy only of the darkest ages of popery. The present is not a day of disgraceful credulity: and those persons will do little service to the cause of genuine religion, who would require us to admit an assertion without adequate proof.

We have now before us an assertion of a very remarkable nature; an assertion no less, than that an entire change of mind *always* accompanies a particular outward application of water. Here we must carefully note, that this assertion respects, not merely an abstract opinion, but an absolute matter of fact. Hence, whether we think fit to receive the assertion or not as a theological dogma, the infidel will treat it with utter derision, unless, by a direct establishment of the alleged *fact*, it be made good past all possibility of contradiction. For it is to be observed, that the truth of this matter of fact, which is maintained to be so common as even to be of daily occurrence, cannot be proved to an infidel from a Scripture which he rejects; nor indeed can it be satisfactorily proved to any one simply from Scripture. The truth of the present alleged fact, like the truth of any other alleged fact, must at last be established by positive evidence. Thus, if the Bible asserted ever so unequivocally, that the temper of the lion was remarkably mild and gentle; as the assertion would respect a mere matter of fact, we could not admit its truth if it contradicted the evidence of our senses. Accordingly, as we deny the popish miracle of transubstantiation, because it asserts a direct matter of fact which our senses contradict; so must we reject the assertion before us, just as we should reject the assertion that the lion is an animal of a gentle temper, unless the matter of fact to which it relates can be finally established by the positive, unvarying evidence of universal experience. The assertion itself we do not hastily reject, however extraordinary it may seem: but, as it respects a matter of fact, the truth of which must be proved or disproved like that of any other

matter of fact; we conceive ourselves to act with sobriety and prudence, in requiring that its veracity should be demonstrated to us after the same manner and on the the same principles that the veracity of naked facts ordinarily is demonstrated.*

* This mode of reasoning would equally apply to the doctrine of the Trinity, if the Supreme Being could be subjected to cognizance of our senses. But, as that is impossible, we can never affirm that the evidence of our senses contradicts the assertion, that God so exists, as to be *one* in this point of view, and *three* in that. For want of attending to this plain distinction, between the having it in our power to subject an assertion to the evidence of our senses, and the not having it in our power to do so, the Socinians sometimes argue very inconclusively against the doctrine of the Trinity from the doctrine of transubstantiation. Can their senses take cognizance of the nature of the Deity, as they can take cognizance of the nature of bread and wine? If such be the case, their argument is conclusive; if not, not.

Perhaps it may be said, that a change of mind does not come so directly under the cognizance of our senses as a change of bread and wine; and consequently that I adduce cases which are not perfectly parallel.

This I readily allow: but I see not, how such an acknowledgment at all invalidates my argument. For the real question is, not whether the two cases be exactly parallel, but whether they do not both come under the cognizance of our senses. If the soul of a baptized adult *always* experiences in the article of baptism that radical change, which is maintained to be the *inseparable* attendant of that ordinance; the *fact* of that change must inevitably come under the cognizance of his senses, so that he may be able from his own actual experience to speak positively as to its reality. For to assert, that this great change may take place in the soul of an adult at the precise moment of his baptism; a change so great, that it is described, in the language of inspiration, as a passage from darkness to light, and from moral extinction to moral animation; to assert that such a change may take place in the soul of an adult at the specifically defined moment of his baptism, and yet that he may be all the while perfectly unconscious of the occurrence of any such *fact*; to assert this seems to me about as hopeful a proposition, as to assert the transmutation of the sacramental bread and wine into human flesh and blood, while yet the alleged *fact* excites not in us the least consciousness of its having happened. So far is Holy Scripture from giving any countenance to such a gross absurdity, that it no less expressly than rationally insists, that the *fact* of the regenerative change must necessarily be known to those in whose souls it has occurred.

I. Since then the assertion before us respects, not merely a matter of opinion, but also a matter of fact; the discussion may properly begin with an inquiry, how far this alleged matter of fact is supported in all cases by actual experience: I say all cases, because a single exception will obviously invalidate a general assertion.

Now, as it appears to me, the burden of proof, by every rule of fair argument, rests with those who make the assertion; not the burden of disproof with those who

"Hereby *know* we that we dwell in him and he in us, *because* he hath given us of his Spirit." 1 John iv. 13. "*We know* that we are of God." 1 John v. 19. "*Know* ye not your own selves, how that Jesus Christ is in you, except ye be reprobates." 2 Cor. xiii. 5. But if regeneration be a *fact* capable of being known; then the reality of its occurrence must be proved like that of any other *fact*, by direct evidence.

As the *fact* of regeneration, then, in the case of him who experiences it, is, according to Scripture, immediately subjected to the cognizance of sense; so in the case of others who may be viewed as bystanders or witnesses, it is similarly, though not in so high a degree, subjected also to the same cognizance of sense. We distinctly perceive and admit the *fact*, that a lion is ferocious: and we admit it without hesitation, because his deeds prove the reality of it. Now Christ instructs us, precisely in the same manner, to subject the *fact* of regeneration in others to the cognizance of our senses. As the soul is the principle of action, our deeds will inevitably participate of the nature of our soul. Hence our Lord well argues: "Ye shall *know* them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistle? Even so every good tree bringeth forth good fruit; but a corrupt tree bringeth forth evil fruit. A good tree *cannot*" (morally cannot) "bring forth evil fruit; neither *can* a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit. Wherefore by their fruits ye shall *know* them." Matt. vii. 16, 17, 18, 20. And hence his apostle Paul argues more at length exactly on the same principle, when he contrasts together "the works of the flesh" or the deeds of the unregenerate and "the fruit of the Spirit" or the productions of the regenerate when under a divine influence. Gal. v. 19-25.

If then any one assert as a *fact*, that regeneration *invariably* attends baptism; we have a right to demand a proof of this *fact* from direct evidence, just as we might demand a proof of any other *fact*. Insomuch, with reverence be it spoken, even if Scripture itself asserted such a *fact*, (which in truth it neither does, nor can do,) we could not admit the reality of its occurrence, if universal experience proved that it did not occur.

deny it. Where then is the proof of the matter of fact with which we are concerned?

1. It will probably be said, that in the case of infant baptism, it is unreasonable to expect a proof of concomitant spiritual regeneration, because we have no means of positively ascertaining what takes place in the soul of an infant.

The child is asserted to be regenerate on the broad ground that baptism is always accompanied by regeneration ; and, if, what is very ordinarily the case, he exhibit no one evidence of a spiritual change of heart as he advances in years, it is then urged that he was doubtless regenerated in the article of baptism, but that he afterwards entirely fell away from his high condition. Whence, it is contended, if he should at any future time become a decidedly pious character, this change from a life of wickedness to a life of real godliness is not to be esteemed regeneration, but is to be viewed only as a recovery of what had been previously conferred in baptism.

2. I readily acknowledge, that it is unreasonable to expect a proof of concomitant spiritual regeneration in a baptized infant, because we cannot question such a subject as to the reality of the great mental change which he is alleged to undergo : and, whatever we may think of the probability of an hypothesis which maintains that this change may be so completely obliterated with the infant's increasing years, that not a vestige or even a recollection of it may remain, and that the infant himself shall at no one period have exhibited by his views and actions the least indication that he has undergone the change ; whatever, I say, we may think of the probability of this hypothesis, we at least cannot prove it to be erroneous by referring to actual experience.

But it is to be remembered, that infants are not the only persons baptized within the pale of Christ's church. That sound branch of it, the Church of England, has specially provided an office for the due baptism of adults : and, as

these have attained to years of discretion, they doubtless cannot be altogether insensible to the workings of their own minds. Such subjects then appear to be the very persons by whose unanimous testimony the alleged matter of fact must be proved, if it can be proved at all.

It is asserted, that the spiritual change of heart called regeneration *invariably* takes place in the precise article of baptism. If this assertion therefore be well founded, the spiritual change in question will *invariably* take place in every adult at the identical moment when he is baptized. That is to say, at the very instant when the hand of the priest brings his body in contact with baptismal water; at that precise instant, his understanding begins to be illuminated, his will to be reformed, and his affections to be purified. *Hitherto* he has walked in darkness, but *now*, to use the scriptural phrase, he has “passed from darkness into light.” *Hitherto* he has been wrapped in a death-like sleep of trespasses and sins: but *now* he awakes and rises from the dead, Christ himself giving him life. *Hitherto* he has been a chaos of vice and ignorance and spiritual confusion; “the natural man receiving not the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness unto him:” but *now* he is “created after God in righteousness and true holiness;” “being in Christ, he is a new creature;” having become *spiritual*, the things of the Spirit of God are no longer foolishness unto him; he “knows them, because they are spiritually discerned.” Such are the emphatic terms in which regeneration is described by the sacred writers: what we have to do therefore, I apprehend, is forthwith to inquire, whether every baptized adult, without a single exception, is *invariably* found to declare, that, in the precise article of baptism, his soul experienced a change analogous to that which is so unequivocally set forth in the above-cited texts of Scripture.

The discussion, in its present stage, as I have already observed, respects a simple matter of fact: each baptized adult either *does*, or *does not*, experience the change in

question; and I see not how the point can be decided, except by a formal appeal to his own experience. Can any single instance then be adduced—(we have a right to demand the adduction of every instance without exception; but, to waive that right,) can any single instance be adduced, in which a baptized adult has been known to declare, that, the moment he was sprinkled with the consecrated water, he perceived a new light to dart into his understanding, a new bias to be given to his will, a new character to be stamped upon his affections; that he distinctly found himself to pass “from darkness into light, and from the power of Satan unto God;” that he was sensible, in short, of his altogether becoming a new creature, wholly different, so far as spiritual matters are concerned, from the creature which he has hitherto been?

3. Here it may possibly be said, that we are not too curiously to inquire into the precise mode in which the work of sanctification commences, and that it may have commenced in the soul of an adult at the very moment of his baptism, though he himself may have been all the while insensible of the circumstance.

Most readily do I allow, that we are not to inquire too curiously into the precise mode in which sanctification commences; and most fully do I concede, that, as it is acknowledged on all hands to be a progressive work or (in the language of Scripture) “a growth in grace,” the absolute beginning of it at the moment of regeneration may be very indistinct to the perceptions; but this does not remove the difficulty as to the alleged matter of fact now before us.

(1.) If we adopt the theory, that regeneration is not necessarily attached to baptism, but that it takes place at some indefinite period during the life of a Christian; it will be perfectly easy to conceive, that it may have occurred, and yet from its very faintness and indistinctness may not have been specially noticed at the time when it did occur.

The reason of this is obvious. The event was *not previously expected* at the precise moment when it really took place; and, as God's Holy Spirit acts through the medium of our rational faculties; though the subject of regeneration would soon distinctly perceive that he now viewed religion differently from what he viewed it before, that his will was now strongly inclined to attend to it, and that his affections were now stirred up in a lively gratitude towards his gracious Creator and Benefactor; he would still not be at all aware that it was any particular agency of the Sanctifier upon his mind. He would be apt to attribute it, either to the book which he had been reading, or to the conversation in which he had been engaged, or to that inexplicable spontaneous working of the human soul of which all must at different times have been conscious; and, as such, it would never occur to him to note down the precise moment when he had made what would only appear to him a somewhat stronger resolution than ordinary, of paying a proper attention to religion. Hence, of course, as he gradully increased in divine knowledge and holy inclinations and devout affections, he would perceive himself to be a totally altered man from what he well remembers that he once was; but, if he were to be asked the identical moment when the change commenced, he would be unable to specify it.

And this I take to be the general case of those, who have indeed been born of the Spirit; "One thing I know, that, whereas I was blind, now I see."

(2.) But there is a most material difference between regeneration thus taking place, and the alleged *matter of fact* which is now under consideration.

We see that according to the theory by which regeneration is not inseparably tied to baptism, whenever it occurs, it occurs *unexpectedly*; while, according to the opposite theory, whenever an adult is baptized, if his regeneration takes place at all in the article of baptism, it takes place *expectedly*.

The divine, who holds that baptism and regeneration are inseparable, will obviously, in his preparatory instructions to the catechumen, first teach him, that the solemn initiatory rite, of which he desires to be a partaker, is "the outward visible sign of the inward *invisible* grace" of regeneration; next he will explain to him, that the inward spiritual grace typified by baptism, is "a death unto sin, and a new birth unto righteousness;" adding, that by this new birth is meant a total and radical change in the condition of the soul, so that they, who are "by nature born in sin and the children of wrath, are hereby made the children of grace," or, as the Anglican Church elsewhere expresses this great spiritual change, "they are regenerated and as it were brought forth anew by the Holy Ghost, so that they shall be nothing like the men they were before;"* lastly he will assure him, that although baptism is indeed the outward sign of regeneration, the two are so indissolubly united together, that, whenever baptism is duly administered, the subject of it will infallibly at the same time experience the inward grace of regeneration as it is most accurately described in the public documents of the Church of England on the sure authority of Scripture.

Now it is manifest, that, after such instructions as these, the adult catechumen cannot but *expect* to find a most important change take place in the spiritual condition of his mind, at the precise moment when the officiating priest sprinkles upon him the water of baptism. He will *expect* it, because he has been carefully taught, that the sign and the thing signified are inseparably connected together, that he must look for his regeneration in the very article of baptism, and that it is wholly nugatory to imagine that any regeneration takes place at some indefinite time subsequent to the due administration of the outward rite. He will not indeed suppose, that the work of sanctification is completed

*Homil. for Whitsunday, part i. p. 390, Oxon.

in his soul in the same instant that the water touches his body; because he will doubtless have been rightly taught, that it is progressive in its nature: but he *must expect*, agreeably to the tenor of his instructions, that it commences at that identical instant; and, if it then commences, the man all the while *expecting* fully the commencement of it, he must surely be most distinctly sensible of such a commencement.

For nothing but the most determined credulity of the most inveterate system-framer can venture to maintain the strange opinion, that, at a particular previously specified moment, a change takes place in the soul of an adult so great, that (in the language of our church) "he is nothing like the man that he was immediately before;" that the adult himself is *in full expectation* of this radical change, when it does take place; and yet, though he becomes by it "nothing like the man that he was before," so imperceptible is the change by which this mighty renovation is effected, that he is quite insensible of any peculiar working of his mind, and can detect nothing worthy of note save the same general purposes of a holy life which have recurred to him perhaps a hundred different times while attending to the preparatory instructions of his pastor. He, who can believe this, may well believe also, that in the sacrament of the Lord's Supper the bread and wine are literally transmuted into the body and blood of Christ, though such a transmutation stands contradicted as a matter of fact by the direct evidence of the senses.

4. Thus we may venture to assert, that if spiritual regeneration universally takes place at the baptism of every adult catechumen; it must also universally, as being *previously expected*, be *sensibly perceived* by every baptized adult. Nor can he ever hereafter forget, and thus not be able distinctly to specify, the precise moment when his regeneration took place; as may easily, or rather indeed must generally, be the case with regenerate Christians according to the other theory for reasons which have already been

amply set forth : because he never can forget the day when he was baptized ; because he can never cease to recollect that peculiar conversion of his mind, by which he instantaneously found himself “nothing like the man that he was before ;” and because, on the very principles of his preparatory instruction conducted as the theory now before us requires it to be conducted, he can never mistake for a transient good resolution of his own soul a radical change of heart which he has been authoritatively taught to view as the inseparable concomitant of baptism.

5. On these grounds, since the whole question in its present stage respects *a matter of fact* ; we have a right to demand a proof of that fact from positive universal experience in the case of baptized adults, ere we assent to the reality of its occurrence. If the matter be notorious, the proof will be easily procured : meanwhile let it be remembered, that the assertion is broad and universal, and consequently that it will be invalidated even by a single exception. The theory maintains, that regeneration ALWAYS accompanies baptism : hence it is plain, that even ONE exception, if any such can be produced, must needs overturn it.

II. Leaving the advocates of this theory to establish, as best they may, the matter of fact which they allege ; I proceed to notice some very extraordinary conclusions, both positive and negative, which, so far as I can judge, necessarily spring from it.

1. I shall begin with pointing out the positive conclusions to which I allude.

Regeneration, it is allowed on all hands, places a man in a state of salvation ; for such is the necessary inference to be drawn, both from the words of our Lord, and from every passage of Scripture in which it is treated of or alluded to. If no man can see the kingdom of God *except* he be born again ; then, *provided* he be born again, he *will* see the kingdom of God : and, in like manner, if no man can see the Lord *without* holiness, of which regeneration is

the commencing point; then, *with* holiness, he plainly will see the Lord. Now by the theory, regeneration is always communicated at baptism. Hence it will follow, that baptism, always communicating regeneration, always places the person baptized in a state of salvation. So that, as every baptized person is *ipso facto* placed in a state of salvation; every baptized person, who dies immediately after the rite has been administered to him, and therefore forfeits not his privilege by lapsing into mortal sin, is infallibly sure of entering into the kingdom.

(1.) Now under this view of the subject, every prudent parent, who espouses the theory before us, will carefully refrain from having his child baptized during its infancy; because by deferring the rite, he may almost insure the salvation of his offspring; and on the same ground, every adult, who is converted from paganism to Christianity, would do well to put off his baptism and reserve it as a sure viaticum in his last extremity. By such an arrangement the pleasures of sin may be freely tasted with very inconsiderable danger to him who adopts it. No man indeed can absolutely guard against sudden death; but, in ordinary cases, he may have wallowed during his whole life with perfect safety and impunity in every abomination, provided only he takes care to be duly baptized when his last great enemy is approaching.

Nor let it be said that this is a strained and imaginary case; it is a case that has actually occurred more than once. The theory, with its sufficiently obvious conclusion, had become fashionable, during the fourth century, in a rapidly degenerating Church. From his earliest conversion to the last period of his life, the emperor Constantine, whose zeal for the establishment of Christianity is much less equivocal than his piety, remained in the state of a catechumen; and was not received by baptism into the number of the faithful until a few days before his death, when that sacred rite was administered to him at Nicomedia by Eusebius its bishop. This action, we are

told, was agreeable to the ordinary practice of the times; and we have the ground of such a practice set forth to us very explicitly. It was a custom with many, in that century, to put off their baptism to the last hour; that thus, immediately after receiving by this rite the remission of their sins, they might ascend pure and spotless to the mansions of life and immortality.*

The practice clearly emanated from the very theory now under consideration; and it will be difficult to prove, that the opinion respecting the safety and utility of such a practice was not legitimately deduced from the received premises. For, if we admit the theory, what are we to believe concerning the final doom of those who thus partook of a death-bed baptism? We may style their conduct sinful and presumptuous as long as we please, and we shall designate it no doubt by strictly appropriate appellations; but we shall not thus extricate ourselves from the difficulty. Bad as their conduct may be, still worse as their previous lives may have been, yet if regeneration universally accompanies baptism, the persons thus tardily baptized were *assuredly regenerate*; and, if assuredly regenerate, they were *in a state of salvation*; and, if in a state of salvation, as their death immediately followed their baptism, they must all have been SAVED.

I see only one mode of escape from this very extraordinary conclusion; even though the case should be adduced of some hardened profligate who solicited and received the rite of baptism merely through fear of perdition. The mode is this: to maintain, that the man was indeed truly regenerated in the article of baptism; but that immediately afterwards, ere death could seize its already sinking prey, he relapsed into mortal sin, and thus forfeited the privilege which he had so recently gained.

But who would seriously attempt to disentangle himself by so miserable a subterfuge? Or, at any rate, who

* Mosheim's Eccles. Hist. Cent. iv. part i. c. I. § 8.

could soberly admit, that he had successfully accomplished his escape by such an expedient? The question is plainly reducible to the following dilemma.

Either each person, thus baptized, was consequently regenerated; in which case he was received into heaven, no matter what his former life had been, and even though he approached the baptismal font in the very act of deliberate, presumptuous, regularly planned hypocrisy; or each person, thus baptized, was not consequently regenerated; in which case, the theory that baptism and regeneration are inseparable, must be given up as altogether untenable.

(2.) The same train of reasoning will equally apply to the case of a pagan, who should be baptized at the point of death, wholly unconscious of the nature of the rite, and altogether either ignorant of the name of Christ or having previously rejected him.

Now, if such a man has been duly baptized, what are we to think of his condition? Is he regenerate, or is he not regenerate? If the former, his regeneration forthwith carries him to heaven, though in his lifetime he may have been a pertinacious blasphemer and opposer of the word; if the latter, then baptism and regeneration are not necessarily inseparable.

A case like this is not quite an imaginary one; though I see not why we should not have a right to propose a possible case that was wholly imaginary. I have heard of something similar to it occurring in the labours of the popish missionaries; I speak however only from recollection, and cannot at present produce my authority.

2. The *negative* conclusions, which may be deduced from the theory now before us, are not less extraordinary than the positive ones.

As baptism and regeneration are pronounced to be inseparable, the inward grace always accompanying the outward sign; it will inevitably follow, that, where baptism is, there is regeneration also; and, on the other hand, where baptism is not, there likewise regeneration is not.

That is to say, as all the baptized are *ipso facto* regenerate, so all the unbaptized are *ipso facto* unregenerate. But the unregenerate, both according to the express assertion of our Lord and also in the very nature of things themselves, cannot enter into the kingdom of heaven. For regeneration is the commencing point of sanctification; whence, as none can see God without holiness, so of course no fallen creature can see God without having begun to be holy. But, agreeably to the theory, all the unbaptized are unregenerate. Therefore all the unbaptized are *ipso facto* excluded from the kingdom of heaven.

Such is the grand general conclusion from the theory which we are considering: no unbaptized person can possibly be saved; and as might easily be anticipated, it branches out into various ramifications equally portentous with the parent stock.

(1.) Thus every individual pagan, whether young or old, whether he has heard of the name of Christ or has not heard of it, in whatever age and in whatever country he may have lived, is consigned at once to irremediable perdition; for the man has not been baptized; therefore he is not regenerate; therefore he cannot enter into the kingdom of heaven.

I stop not to discuss the very awful and difficult subject of the final condition of the virtuous heathens; such a discussion were here manifestly out of place; it is sufficient for me to observe, that the question is at once decided, without the least hesitation, by the undaunted theory before us.* According to a necessary conclusion from that

* Assuredly no pagan can see God without regeneration; because regeneration is the commencement of holiness, and "without holiness no man shall" (or even can) "see the Lord;" but this does not necessarily involve the eternal destruction of the whole Gentile world.

When we consider the tender loving mercies of our God, who is no hard master expecting to reap where he sowed not and to gather where he had not strawed, (as the wicked servant in the parable sought to misrepresent him;) and when we recollect the strenuous wish expressed by some of the

theory, not a pagan can be saved. Hence the Romanists, who advocate it with no less steadiness than the doctrine of transubstantiation, have ever duly and consistently maintained that the whole pagan world will infallibly be consigned to eternal damnation.

Their conclusion is doubtless drawn with the strictest logical precision from their premises: nor can any one, who holds the premises, shrink from it, without virtually acknowledging the premises themselves to be unsound.

(2.) Thus again, on the same principles, every individual Mohammedan, whether he has had an opportunity of receiving the Gospel or not, stands in a similar predicament.

He has not been baptized: whence the ultimate conclusion is, that he cannot be saved.

(3.) Such, also, according to the present theory, is the opinion which we are bound to maintain of all children, who, though born of Christian parents, die unbaptized; of all Quakers; and of all Jews.

better heathens for a divine instructor, who might dispel the impenetrable darkness with which they felt themselves surrounded; we may not unreasonably perhaps venture to hope, that, in numerous instances, that radical change of heart, which is so essential to an admission into the kingdom of heaven, may have been effected by the Holy Spirit even in the article of death; and that so, even at the eleventh hour, they may have been called into the mystical vineyard of the Lord. In this case, the ground of their justification would still be the same as our own. The all-sufficient merits of the Redeemer would be the meritorious cause of their salvation; for, as it is soundly urged in the 18th article of the English Church, they would not be "saved by the law or sect which they professed," on the score of their having been "diligent to frame their lives according to that law and the light of nature," but "only by the name of Jesus Christ, whereby men must be saved."

What I have here stated is purely hypothetical, for Scripture has left us very much in the dark on this subject; but the theory with which we are now concerned, settles the matter without any difficulty by a single syllogism. None can be saved but the *regenerate*; none are regenerate but the *baptized*; the pagans however were clearly *not* baptized; therefore they were *not* regenerated; therefore they *cannot be saved*.

(4.) As for the last of these, since their determined rejection of God's remedy for sin, many perhaps would not be disposed to urge much in their favour: but unfortunately the argument does not stop with them; it equally extends to all their ancestors previous to the advent of Christ. Not one of these was baptized; save latterly according to the mere human institution of the Jewish baptism, to which of course no efficacy can possibly be ascribed any more than to the various baptisms of the pagan mysteries: not one of these was baptized; not one of them therefore was regenerated: and consequently not one of them was saved. David, Samuel, Josiah, Isaiah, Hezekiah, were all involved in the same fate, and for the same reason. The principle is universal: its application therefore must be universal likewise; otherwise we at once give up the principle itself.

To this it may be replied, that circumcision in the Levitical Church is analogous to baptism in the Christian Church. Whence it would follow, that, as all the baptized are regenerated in the one, so all the circumcised are regenerated in the other. The circumcised therefore were universally brought into a state of holiness and thence into a capability of salvation, no less than the baptized.

It is indeed abundantly manifest, that circumcision in the Levitical Church corresponds with baptism in the Christian: yet such an answer, when thoroughly sifted, will be found, I fear, to make confusion only tenfold worse confounded.

In the first place, if circumcision in the Jewish Church universally conferred regeneration, as baptism in the Christian Church has been roundly asserted to do; then it were plainly superfluous and nugatory to baptize any circumcised person: for the man was already regenerate by circumcision; and therefore could not be again made regenerate by baptism. How then are we to account for the circumstance, that when our Lord instituted the sacrament of baptism, he himself baptized all his *circumcised*

converts, and that he left a general injunction to his apostles to baptize all proselytes without distinction, whether Jews or Gentiles? He, we may be sure, would do nothing but what was consonant to the dictates of eternal wisdom. Yet, if all his Jewish converts were already regenerated because they had been duly circumcised, it is hard to say, according to the present hypothesis, why they should be additionally required to undergo the rite of baptism. We may easily conceive, that Christ, for wise reasons, might think fit to change the outward visible sign of regeneration : but in that case, they, who had been previously regenerated by reception of the Levitical sign, could plainly have no need to receive the Christian sign. To the converted Gentiles it would indeed be necessary : but to the converted Jews it could certainly be no more in effect than the mere bootless repetition of the appointed outward sign of regeneration. The latter, according to the supposed answer, were already regenerated : hence they clearly could not be a second time regenerated by baptism.

In the second place, even if we allow for a moment that circumcision bestowed regeneration under the law as baptism has been said to bestow it under the gospel, we shall still gain nothing more than a short removal of the difficulty. If circumcision and baptism be equally signs of regeneration, and if they both equally confer the thing signified when they are duly administered : then none can be regenerated, and therefore none can be saved, except those, who either have been circumcised under the law before the advent of Christ, or have been baptized under the gospel after his advent. Now circumcision was first instituted in the days of Abraham, and baptism was first divinely enjoined by Christ. Previous therefore to the days of Abraham there was neither circumcision nor baptism : at least neither rite existed before that time, so far as we can learn from Scripture, as a divine and positive ordinance. Hence it will follow, if the inward grace of

regeneration be inseparable from its outward sign, that not a single person was regenerated before the time of Abraham, and consequently that not a single person could have been saved. The old fathers might have eagerly looked forward to the manifestation of the promised seed; Noah, in some explicable sense of the words, might have been "a just man and perfect in his generations;" Abel, in an equally inexplicable sense of the term, might have been called righteous even by Christ himself: but all this would avail them nothing according to the present theory: not one of them was either baptized or circumcised; therefore not one of them was regenerated; therefore not one of them could have been admitted into the kingdom of heaven. Common sense does indeed teach us that they were admitted into heaven; but what then becomes of a theory, which inseparably ties regeneration to baptism?

(5.) There is yet another class of persons too remarkable to be passed over in silence, who are equally involved in the conclusion necessarily drawn from the present theory.

In the primitive Church, during a period of horrible persecution, it not unfrequently happened, that a devout catechumen was dragged to the stake and barbarously put to death, ere he had partaken of the initiatory rite of baptism: and there are cases upon record of pagans being suddenly converted to Christianity, by merely witnessing the constancy of the martyred faithful; who, instantly under the first impulse of zeal professing their belief, were forthwith led to slaughter themselves. Now what must we suppose to be the final condition of these pious men? Were they saved, or were they not saved? They certainly were never baptized: therefore, if baptism and regeneration be inseparable, they never were regenerated. But, if they never were regenerated, then they cannot have entered into the kingdom of heaven: for "without holiness no man shall see the Lord;" and regeneration is the commencing point of holiness. Yet this conclusion is

evidently too absurd to be admitted for a single moment : no reasonable man can doubt of the salvation of such persons. If then they obtained salvation, they must have been previously regenerated : because it is a scripturally determined point, that without regeneration and consecutive holiness no man possibly can be saved. But, if they were previously regenerated, then they must have been regenerated without having been baptized. How are we to extricate ourselves from this difficulty?

An attempt has been made : with what success, remains to be considered. I have already observed, that the doctrine of the inseparable union of baptism and regeneration early crept into the church : hence the remarkable case before us could not fail of attracting attention. It was clearly seen, that the salvation of such martyrs could not be reasonably doubted : it was at the same time acknowledged, that none could be saved without regeneration. But the men had never been baptized : how then, upon the principle of inseparability, could they have been born again ; and how, without having been born again, could they enter into the kingdom of heaven ? It was answered, that they had been baptized in their own blood, and consequently that they had been regenerated in the very article of martyrdom.

Now, so far as I can judge, such a solution, though no doubt abundantly ingenious, is neither more nor less than a complete giving up of the question. For what is this baptism of blood, which is here adduced to solve a difficulty ? Was any such baptism ever instituted by Christ ? Did he ever connect it, either symbolically or causally, with spiritual regeneration ? Scripture acknowledges no such ordinance. The pagans indeed had their initiatory *Criobolia* and *Taurobolia* : but the Gospel recognises not any initiatory *Anthropobolium*. The simple fact is, that the men were never baptized at all : yet they were rightly pronounced to have been saved ; and were thence necessa-

rily confessed to have been regenerated. I need scarcely draw the obvious conclusion from such premises.

III. Having now sufficiently pointed out the inferences both positive and negative, which must inevitably be drawn from the theory that baptism and regeneration are always inseparable; I shall proceed to inquire, how far this theory is supported or not supported by analogy.

Our divine Master has been pleased to institute two sacraments in his church, Baptism and the Lord's Supper. Now the generic character of a sacrament is, that it consists of two parts; a certain outward visible sign, and a certain inward spiritual grace. Each therefore of the sacraments has its own two proper parts, mutually corresponding with each other; visible with visible, invisible with invisible. In Baptism, the outward visible sign is water; and the inward spiritual grace, or the thing symbolically represented, is regeneration: while, in the Lord's Supper, after a manner strictly analogical, the outward visible sign is the bread and wine; and the inward part, or the thing symbolically represented, is the body and blood of Christ, verily indeed, yet spiritually received for the sustenance and refreshing of the soul. Here we may observe, that in each sacrament like answers to like with perfect accuracy: for they both equally relate to something inward, shadowed out or symbolized by something outward.

Such being the case, it seems only natural to conclude, unless indeed we have some very strong evidence to the contrary, that as the analogy between the two sacraments is perfect thus far, it would also be perfect throughout. Each sacrament, we have seen, has two parts, an outward and an inward: and each outward part is symbolical of the corresponding inward part. If then the outward part in one sacrament is not only symbolical of the corresponding inward part, but likewise inseparably associated with it; so that where the former exists the latter also exists, and where the former does not exist the latter also does not exist: it appears but reasonable to argue from analogy,

that this is equally the case with the two parts in the other sacrament. And, inversely, if the outward part in one sacrament, though doubtless symbolical of the corresponding inward part, is yet not inseparably associated with it; so that the former may exist, while the latter is absent: it again appears but reasonable to argue from analogy, that the two parts also in the other sacrament are similarly circumstanced. This at least is abundantly manifest, that if they be not similarly circumstanced, the analogy between the two sacraments stops at one particular point and is not perfect throughout.

On these grounds, they, who maintain the universal inseparability of the two parts in Baptism, ought, would they be consistent, to maintain the universal inseparability of the two parts in the Lord's Supper: and, on the other hand, they, who deny the first proposition, ought equally, would they be consistent, to deny the other also. Of this the Romanists seem to be thoroughly aware: and to give them their due, they may justly claim the praise of perfect analogical consistency. As they maintain, that regeneration is inseparably united to Baptism; so they likewise maintain, that every one, who receives the consecrated elements of bread and wine, receives also the body and blood of Christ. As for their peculiar doctrine of Transubstantiation, it has nothing to do with the present question. For the matter in debate is, not whether the consecrated elements shadow out the literal or the mystical body and blood of Christ; but whether the reception of Christ in some sense or another be the universal consequence of receiving the consecrated elements. Protestants and Papists may differ in their views of the thing signified by the bread and wine: but the real question, with which we are at present concerned, is this; whether the thing signified by the consecrated elements be universally received by the person who receives the elements themselves. Now this question the Romanists, very consist-

ently with their views of the inseparability of baptism and regeneration, decide in the affirmative.

But are the Protestant advocates for the inseparability of outward baptism by water and inward regeneration by the Holy Spirit equally consistent in their opinion respecting the two parts in the Lord's Supper? I fear, that it will be utterly impossible to concede to them the same praise for consistency, which has been justly conceded to the Romanists. I apprehend, they believe, no more than their opponents on the question of regeneration, that every wicked man, who presumptuously eats the consecrated bread and drinks the consecrated wine, does by that act spiritually partake of the mystical body and blood of Christ. On this point, at least, the Church of England is perfectly explicit. "The wicked, and such as be void of a lively faith, although they do carnally and visibly press with their teeth (as St. Augustine saith) the sacrament of the body and blood of Christ: yet in no wise are they partakers of Christ; but rather, to their condemnation, do eat and drink the sign or sacrament of so great a thing."*

Thus it appears, that they, who vehemently maintain the universal inseparability of the two parts in one sacrament, equally maintain the very possible and the very frequent separability of the two parts in the other sacrament; thus palpably and completely violating the law of analogy. But no such violation can be ascribed to their opponents respecting the doctrine of regeneration being the universal concomitant of outward baptism. They are perfectly consistent in their views of the two sacraments, though they take a position diametrically opposite to that of the equally consistent Romanists. As they assert the frequent separability of the outward and inward parts in one sacrament, so they analogously assert the frequent separability of the outward and inward parts in the other sacrament. While, in short, they believe, that a man may

*Art. xxix.

carnally partake of the bread and wine without spiritually partaking of Christ's body and blood; they likewise believe, that a person may be externally baptized in water without being internally regenerated by the Holy Ghost.

From what has now been said, some judgment may possibly be formed, how far the theory, that outward baptism and inward regeneration are universally inseparable, can be reconciled either with actual experience, or right reason or analogy; it remains to be inquired, whether this theory be more agreeable to Scripture, to the decisions of the Anglican Church as deduced from Scripture, and to the views of a great body of the ablest divines of that church. To prolong the discussion any further than is here laid down may be deemed superfluous in a member of the Church of England.

SERMON II.

ROMANS ii. 28, 29.

THE theory, that spiritual regeneration is the inseparable concomitant of external baptism by water, has frequently been maintained with a degree of confidence perhaps more dogmatical than prudent. A sober and genuine Protestant inquirer, however, will be little disposed to receive any system, merely because it comes recommended by a somewhat overweening positiveness. He will rather be disposed to prove all things, and to hold fast only that which is good. Hence he will not lightly admit a theory, which advances one of the most extraordinary propositions upon record. He will not indeed peremptorily decide against it in the first instance, simply because it does advance a most extraordinary position; for he well knows, that, although we are not precisely bound to receive an extraordinary position because it is boldly and peremptorily asserted to be true, yet very extraordinary positions may after all be perfectly consistent with veracity. But he conceives it to be not only his right, but his bounden duty also, to sift such a position to the very bottom by every varied mode which he can devise; that so he may admit it or reject it, according as he is determined by the weight of evidence. This was the grand principle of the Reformation; a principle, by which real scriptural truth can never be endangered; a principle, the dereliction of which is a virtual relapse into the very spirit of Popery. Most heartily then can a genuine Protestant say with a late eminent bishop of the English Church, "Would

God, all the Lord's people were prophets."* But, as this in the nature of things can never be, he will at any rate be a decided friend to a spirit of sober inquiry in those who have the means and opportunities of embarking in theological discussion.†

With respect to the theory before us, we have already seen, that there are some considerable grounds for doubting, whether it derives any support either from actual experience or from right reason or from analogy. Now, if this be the case, it is difficult to believe, that a theory so circumstanced can rest upon the solid basis of scriptural authority. For, (to omit the argument from analogy, which is readily acknowledged to be rather presumptive than decisive,) though revelation may teach us many things which are above reason, many things also which it is impossible for us to ascertain by the test of actual experience; it is hard to conceive that the word of God should declare to us any thing, which is directly *contrary* to right reason, and with which actual experience is by no means found to tally. Still we ought not to determine too rashly *à priori*. So limited is the human intellect, that it may easily be mistaken in various matters, which yet appear to be almost selfevident. The consciousness of our own short-sightedness ought to produce in us an unfeigned diffidence and humility. After all the independent reasoning in the world, the question, with those who admit the divine inspiration of the Bible, must finally be determined by reference to the sacred volume itself.

I. We have at present therefore to inquire, whether Scripture affords any just warrant for the theory, that

* Bishop Horsley. Num. xi. 29.

† Most fully is this principle recognised by the Church of England, in her Sixth article :

"Holy Scripture containeth all things necessary to salvation ; so that, whatsoever is not read therein, nor may be proved thereby, is not to be required of any man, that it should be believed as an article of the faith, or be thought requisite or necessary to salvation."

baptism and regeneration are so inseparably united; that, where the one is, the other also is; and, where the one is not, the other also is not.

1. I know not of any texts, which might seem at all to support this alleged inseparability, except the following.

“Jesus answered, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.”*

“According to his mercy he saved us by the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Ghost.”†

“He went and preached unto the spirits in prison, which sometime were disobedient, when once the long-suffering of God waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was a preparing, wherein few, that is eight souls, were saved by water. The like figure whereunto, even baptism, doth also now save us (not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience towards God) by the resurrection of Jesus Christ.”‡

(1.) On the first of these texts it may be said, that a birth from water is immediately associated with a birth from the Spirit; that a birth from both one and the other is represented as being a necessary qualification for the kingdom of heaven; and that an inseparable union of the two may thence be fairly inferred.

(2.) On the second of them it may be said, that in it regeneration is styled the washing or laver of regeneration no less than the renewing of the Holy Ghost. Whence it might be argued, that if regeneration can properly be called a washing or laver, the actual use of water must be associated with the actual reception of the grace; for, if regeneration can be experienced without external washing by water, then there seems an impropriety in denominating that a washing, which in fact has no necessary connection with any washing at all.

(3.) And on the third of them it may be said, that, if

* John iii. 5.

† Tit. iii. 5.

‡ 1 Pet. iii. 19, 20, 21.

we be saved by baptism as Noah and his family were saved by water; then a capability of salvation, or in other words spiritual regeneration, without which no man can be saved, must be conferred in the very act of baptism; because otherwise the comparison does not hold good. For, if regeneration be not conferred by baptism, then are we not saved by baptism. But we are declared to be saved by baptism, just as Noah was saved by water. Therefore, baptism must invariably communicate regeneration.

2. I readily acknowledge, that these texts in the abstract might well be deemed ambiguous; so that, if we had nothing else to guide us, we might not unfairly, though with some hesitation, suppose them to teach the inseparability of regeneration and baptism; but even under such circumstances, I could not allow them to be at all decisive.

It may be remarked of the three conjointly, that, as it is agreed on all hands that baptism is the outward symbol of regeneration, whatever may be its additional efficacy; so it is impossible to deny, that, by one of the most common figures of rhetoric, the sign and the thing signified are conversely and indifferently used in our ordinary forms of speech. Thus, we are accustomed to style the sacrament of the Lord's Supper the holy communion of the body and blood of our Saviour Christ; and with good reason, for Jesus himself scrupled not to say of the bread "this is my body," and of the wine "this is my blood;" yet, when we so speak of the last Supper, we do not mean to intimate, that all who partake of the bread and wine, are therefore partakers of the holy communion of Christ's spiritual body and blood. Thus, in a similar manner, Moses denominates the paschal lamb "the Lord's Pass-over;"* yet no one supposes him to mean, that the lamb was absolutely the same thing as God's act of passing over

* Exodus xii. 11.

the houses of the Israelites. Thus again, inversely, Christ denominates himself a Door and a Vine; and thus Jehovah is said to be a Sun, and a Shield, and a Rock; yet no confusion ensues. By this very common figure, therefore, it is perfectly natural to style regeneration a *washing*, or a *baptism*, and thence to speak of our being "saved by baptism," or of our being "born again from water." It is a phraseology, which we so well understand in all ordinary cases, that there seems little reason, why, in the three texts now under consideration, we should adopt a different principle of interpreting them: at least, ere we adopt such a principle, we may require a decisive proof of its propriety from other less equivocal passages, if any such can be found.

3. If then no other texts treated of the subject save these three, I allow that their import would be ambiguous; for it might be doubtful, whether they used the terms *baptism*, and *washing*, and *water*, literally or metonymically; it might be doubtful, in short, whether the outward sign was pronounced to be essentially necessary to our salvation, or whether we might not be saved solely by the inward grace without the external sign. But there are other texts, which are sufficiently plain and explicit on the subject; and, according to all just rules of criticism, what is ambiguous ought ever to be interpreted by what is not ambiguous.

(1.) We read then, that "he is not a Jew which is one outwardly; neither is that circumcision which is outward in the flesh; but he is a Jew, which is one inwardly; and circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit, and not in the letter, whose praise is not of men but of God."*

From this passage we evidently collect, that circumcision under the Law was a sign of the very same import as baptism under the Gospel; and, if such a view of the matter were at all doubtful, we might have our doubts

* Romans ii. 28, 29.

removed even by the Law itself. "Circumcise the foreskin of your heart," says Moses to the children of Israel, "and be no more stiff-necked."* "The Lord thy God will circumcise thine heart, and the heart of thy seed, to love the Lord thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, that thou mayest live."† Here we find it explicitly declared, that the literal circumcision of the flesh symbolized a mystical circumcision of the heart; and that mystical circumcision of the heart is represented as consisting of such an entire change of the soul, that it now unreservedly loves God with all its powers and faculties. But this is precisely the Christian view of outward baptism and inward regeneration. Therefore, whatever is said of external circumcision, may be considered as in effect said of external baptism.

Now, in the leading text to which I have referred, we are certainly taught, not only that mere outward circumcision is nothing without a corresponding inward circumcision of the heart, but likewise, that this outward circumcision may subsist without inward circumcision: for the apostle places a Jew, who has received the outward sign of circumcision, in studied contrast with a Jew who has experienced the inward circumcision of the heart: his argument, therefore, palpably requires, that the first Jew should be viewed as having received outward circumcision only; otherwise there is no contrast between the two examples. But, if the first Jew has received outward circumcision only, then this outward sign under the Law was not inseparably accompanied by the inward thing signified. Circumcision, however, under the one dispensation answers to baptism under the other dispensation. Therefore, if circumcision under the Law did not necessarily confer regeneration, neither does baptism under the Gospel.

Perhaps, it may be said, that the Jew, adduced by St. Paul, had actually been regenerated in the article of cir-

* Deut. x. 16.

† Deut. xxx. 6.

cumcision, but that he afterwards, through sin, fell away from his privilege; just as it is contended, that every baptized person is *ipso facto* regenerated, though he may hereafter lapse from his regeneration and need to be renewed by grace.

Such a mode of obviating the difficulty as this, while it runs directly counter to the plain language of Scripture, will be found to involve those who employ it in a maze from which they will not very easily extricate themselves.

In a remarkable prophecy respecting the future fortunes of the Israelites, God declares, that when for their sins he shall "have brought them into the land of their enemies, if then their uncircumcised hearts be humbled, he will remember his covenant with Jacob."* Now, it is manifest, that the persons here spoken of had been externally circumcised in the flesh; yet we find God himself asserting, that notwithstanding their due reception of the outward rite, their hearts had still remained uncircumcised: in other words, they had received the outward, visible sign, without any accompanying inward, spiritual grace. The same observation equally applies to various parallel passages. "All the house of Israel are uncircumcised in the heart," says the Lord by the mouth of his prophet Jeremiah.† "Ye stiff-necked, and uncircumcised in heart and ears, ye do always resist the Holy Ghost," exclaims the martyr Stephen to the assembled Sanhedrim of the Jews.‡ Yet the persons, thus spoken of and thus addressed, had all been outwardly circumcised. Hence, it is manifest, that it was quite possible, under the Law, to receive the outward sign without the inward grace: and as circumcision under the Law answers to baptism under the Gospel, it seems very extraordinary that regeneration should be necessarily and inseparably tied to baptism, while yet circumcision of the heart is no invariable concomitant of circumcision of the flesh.

* Lev. xxvi. 41, 42.

† Jer. ix. 26.

‡ Acts vii. 51.

Nor is this all: we must next consider the difficulties with which those will be hampered, who should attempt to maintain, that, as regeneration is inseparable from baptism, so internal circumcision is inseparable from external circumcision. At the first preaching of the Gospel, every Jewish convert was baptized agreeably to the institution of Christ. This being the case, in what light are we to view the spiritual condition of such persons? If they were already regenerated by circumcision, then they could not be a second time regenerated by baptism; unless we admit that a man may experience two spiritual new births, an opinion (I believe) not yet advanced by any one: and again, if they were regenerated by baptism, then they could not have been previously regenerated by circumcision. One theory, or the other, must inevitably be given up; for the two are plainly inconsistent. If regeneration be inseparable from baptism, then it must needs be separable from circumcision: and, if it be inseparable from circumcision, then it must needs be separable from baptism.

The result then of the argument from the text now under consideration is this. External and internal circumcision under the Law answer to baptism and regeneration under the Gospel. But a Jew may be outwardly circumcised in the flesh, *without* being inwardly circumcised in the heart. Therefore a Christian may be outwardly baptized in water, *without* being inwardly regenerated by the Holy Spirit.

(2.) There are certain other texts, which speak the same important truth, not indeed more positively, but more directly: that is to say, they require no long train of reasoning, by which we may arrive at the proper induction from them. These I shall notice conjointly.

“Love is of God: and every one, that loveth, is born of God, and knoweth God.”* Unless then it can be proved,

* 1 John iv. 7.

that no person ever yet experienced that divine charity, which is shed abroad in the hearts of the regenerate by the blessed Spirit, until he had been first duly baptized; we may rest assured, that the being born of God does not depend necessarily upon outward baptism. According to the apostle, every one that possesses this love, whether he has been baptized or not, is born of God.

“Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ, is born of God.”* From the context of this passage it is clear that the faith here spoken of is not a mere notional assent of the understanding, but that faith which is the gift of God himself, and which, in the very nature of things, must be peculiar to the spiritual or regenerate believer; for it is a contradiction in terms to say, that a man, who is not spiritual, can yet possess a spiritual faith. Here then we learn, that every one, who possesses a lively faith, is born of God; and it is incumbent upon those, who maintain the inseparability of baptism and regeneration, to prove, that no one was ever known to possess such a faith unless he had been first baptized.

“Whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world.”† This passage affords us another test of regeneration. Let a person, not from mere secular stoical pride, but from a full confidence in God’s promises through Christ, rise superior to an irreligious world, and order his whole walk and conversation with a determined reference to a future state: that person we are authorized to pronounce regenerate. But was such a devotion as this never exhibited in the Christian Church, save by those who had been first baptized?

In all these passages, St. John says not a syllable respecting outward baptism. The evident drift of them all is exactly alike. He, that loveth, and believeth, and overcometh the world, is born of God, whether outwardly baptized or not; and he, that loveth *not*, and believeth *not*, and

* 1 John v. 1.

† 1 John v. 4.

overcometh *not* the world, is *not* born of God, even though he may have been outwardly baptized.*

4. Additional light will be thrown upon the subject, if to these texts we subjoin examples.

It is maintained that baptism and regeneration are inseparable. But regeneration is essentially necessary for our admission into the kingdom of heaven. Therefore, all who enter into the kingdom of heaven are regenerate.

Hence, if it can be proved that any person has entered into the kingdom of heaven, it will at the same time be proved that that person has been previously regenerated. And, if it can further be proved that the person thus previously regenerated has never been baptized, we shall have as complete demonstration as can be desired, that baptism and regeneration are not inseparable.

In a similar manner, if it can be proved, either that a person was regenerated before baptism or that he had not been regenerated immediately after baptism; we shall still be obviously brought to the same conclusion, that baptism may subsist without regeneration, and that regeneration may subsist without baptism.

Now, if I mistake not, it is abundantly easy to establish all these several propositions by actual examples drawn from Holy Writ.

(1.) Before the time of Abraham, neither circumcision nor baptism had been instituted. Are all the members then

* I need scarcely remark, that the predominating character of a man's principles and practice is plainly the matter designed to be set forth in these texts. As it were absurd to interpret them as teaching, that a regenerate man is distinguished by a perfect love, a perfect faith, or a perfect victory over the world; so it were manifestly unreasonable to object to this delineation of a regenerate man, that he may sometimes fail in each of these important particulars. The grand, leading, permanent bent of the mind is that, which constitutes the special difference between the regenerate and the unregenerate. This ought never to be forgotten; nor will it ever be forgotten by the fair and candid disputant, whose object is not victory, but truth.

of the Patriarchal church to be pronounced unregenerate, on the ground that there can be no regeneration where there is no baptism; and are they thence to be all excluded from the kingdom of heaven, because assuredly no unregenerate person can in the very nature of things be admitted into the presence of God? It is presumed that such is not the case; but we may do more than merely presume. Enoch was translated alive to heaven; therefore Enoch must have been regenerated. But Enoch was neither circumcised nor baptized, and yet he was regenerated; therefore regeneration is not inseparably tied either to circumcision or to baptism.

On this it may be said, that it is unfair to adduce such an example as Enoch, who lived before the institution of any outward visible sign of regeneration. At a period, when as yet there was no appointed sign, the thing signified must of course be independent of any external symbol: but, when once there was an appointed sign, the case becomes widely different. Though Enoch was taken up into heaven, and therefore must have been regenerated independently of any outward visible sign of regeneration; this will not prove, that, when a visible sign has been instituted, the grace of regeneration can be conveyed independently of such sign.

Be it so: let us then at once quit the Patriarchal church, and descend to the Christian.

Our Lord was crucified between two notorious malefactors. These hardened offenders, though suffering themselves, yet joined with one consent in reviling the Saviour of mankind. Yet, even under such circumstances, God did not forget his merciful loving-kindness. The heart of one of the malefactors was suddenly touched by divine grace, even in the midst of his exprobrations. "Lord," said he to Jesus, "remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom." The prayer of the penitent was not unsuccessful. "Jesus said unto him, Verily I say unto thee, To-day shalt thou be with me in paradise." The salvation then of this

malefactor is just as certain a fact, as the salvation of Enoch: he was assuredly admitted into the beatific presence of God. But, "without holiness, no man can see the Lord:" and, of holiness, regeneration is the commencing point; for it is a contradiction in terms to say, that any unregenerate person can be holy while he remains unregenerate. The malefactor, however, did see the Lord. Therefore he must have been sanctified: whence also he must necessarily have been regenerated. But the sacrament of baptism was instituted before the crucifixion: consequently regeneration had at this time an outward visible sign, appointed by our Lord himself. Now the penitent malefactor had certainly never been baptized. Yet was he no less certainly a regenerate person: because, unless he had been such, he could not have entered into the kingdom of heaven; which Christ expressly promised that he should do. The penitent malefactor therefore, subsequent to the institution of baptism, was regenerated without having been baptized. Consequently, regeneration is not inseparably tied to baptism.

(2.) The penitent malefactor was not baptized at all; yet he was certainly regenerated: let us next see, whether we cannot produce any instances of persons being regenerated *before* baptism, and of their afterwards submitting to that rite as an outward sign of an inward spiritual grace.

A certain Roman centurion, named Cornelius, is said, in the Acts of the Apostles, to have been "a devout man and one that feared God with all his house, who gave much alms to the people and prayed to God always."† Such is the general character of this person: and we find it so highly pleasing to the Supreme Being, that he was informed, even by the mouth of an angel, that "his prayers and his alms had come up for a memorial before God."‡ Thus eulogized by the Omniscient himself, he is charged to send

* John iv. 1, 2.

† Acts x. 1, 2.

‡ Acts x. 4.

for Peter, by whom he should be instructed in his duty more fully than he had hitherto been.* The apostle, accordingly, came: and the just Cornelius, as he is well styled by his servants, expressed himself with the utmost humility, as wishing only to “hear all things that were commanded him of God.”† With this lowly and teachable mind, he became the catechumen of St. Peter: and, while the apostle was yet in the act of instructing him and his household, the members of which appear to have been animated with a spirit similar to that of their master, “the Holy Ghost fell on all them which heard the word.”‡ Peter then very naturally asked, “Can any man forbid water that these should not be baptized, which have received the Holy Ghost as well as we?”§ Accordingly, he forthwith “commanded them to be baptized in the name of the Lord.”||

With respect to the descent of the Holy Ghost, which is mentioned as having taken place before the baptism of this devout family, I shall not urge it as any proof of their regeneration; because it does not appear to me to bear upon the question in hand. The ordinary operations of the Blessed Spirit indeed are experienced by none but the regenerate, because these relate exclusively to the divine work of sanctification, whereof regeneration is the commencement: but the extraordinary operations of the same Spirit have been experienced alike by good and bad, by Moses and by Balaam, by David and by Saul, by Peter and by Judas. Now the descent of the Holy Ghost, as described in the present history, was plainly of an extraordinary nature; because it is said, that in consequence of it, Cornelius and his household “spake with tongues.”¶ Hence this descent of the Spirit is no proof that the centurion and his family were regenerated before baptism: they might, or they might not, so far as that part of the

* Acts x. 5, 6.

§ Acts x. 47.

† Acts x. 22, 33.

|| Acts x. 48.

‡ Acts x. 44.

¶ Acts x. 46.

history is concerned. I build nothing therefore upon Cornelius having thus received the Holy Ghost.

The ground I would rather take is that of his character, as set forth to us, not by erring man, but by the infallible voice of inspiration itself. We are told, that the centurion was a devout man, who feared God and always prayed to him. Had this information been given us by mere human authority, it would have proved just nothing at all; because fallible man, who reads not the heart, might easily mistake a decent hypocrite for a truly devout and religious person: but the information is given us by the inspired word of that God, who searches the very secrets of the heart, and who sees all things as they really are. Here therefore we have no room for being mistaken: God himself pronounces Cornelius to be a devout man, and assures him that his prayers and his alms are come up for a memorial before the Lord.

Was then Cornelius at this time a regenerate or an unregenerate man? The unregenerate are exhibited to us in Scripture, as even dead in trespasses and sins, hateful and hating God, and utterly unable while unregenerate to receive the things of the Spirit. Was this the character of Cornelius; or would an all-seeing God have styled a person who really bore such a character, whatever fair outward pretensions he might make, a devout man? We are taught in Holy Writ, that even the very "prayer and sacrifice of the wicked are an abomination to the Lord."* The prayers, however, and the alms of Cornelius are positively declared to have come up for a memorial before God. Was then Cornelius a wicked or (in other words) an unregenerate man? It is, I presume, wholly superfluous to point out the manner in which common sense requires these questions to be answered. Cornelius had plainly been regenerated of the Holy Ghost, at the time when God pronounced him to be a devout

* Prov. xv. 8; xxviii. 9.

man; though it was necessary that he should be fully instructed in the articles of the Christian faith, ere he was formally admitted by baptism into the communion of the Christian Church. Hence St. Peter was called in to preach the Gospel to him, which the angel could not do consistently with the appointed course of God's dispensation: and hence, when his mind had been thoroughly informed, he received the rite of baptism at the hand of a man like himself.

But, if he had been regenerated of the Holy Ghost when God pronounced him a devout man and accepted with complacency his prayers and his alms, then he must have been regenerated before baptism: because these matters occurred previous to his being baptized. And, if he were regenerated before baptism, then we are once more brought to the same conclusion as before, that baptism and regeneration are not inseparable.

Nor is the case of Cornelius a solitary one: a similar train of reasoning may equally be applied to that of the pious Lydia, which is also recorded in the Acts of the Apostles.

We are assured, that the Lord first opened the heart of this woman; that next, in consequence of her heart being thus opened of God, "she attended unto the things which were spoken of Paul;" and lastly, that "she was baptized together with her household."*

Here the order of events is precisely the same as it was in the case of Cornelius: first, regeneration, God working upon her heart through the medium of that imperfect knowledge which she already possessed; next, catechetical instruction; and lastly, regular baptism. If it be objected, that she was not regenerated when God opened her heart in affection to the word; I would ask, how is it possible for God thus to operate upon an unregenerate heart, the heart all the while remaining unregenerate? So far as I

* Acts xvi. 14.

can judge, such an objection would involve a palpable contradiction in terms: for, the moment the heart is divinely and effectually inclined to godliness, that same moment it must be regenerated; because, that same moment, the work of sanctification commences.

There is yet a third instance furnished us by the same inspired book, which must by no means be passed over in silence: I mean that of the apostle Paul.

While breathing out threatenings and slaughter against the Christians, he was suddenly arrested in the vicinity of Damascus by a light and voice from heaven. Trembling and astonished, he exclaimed, "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" The answer commanded him to proceed to the city, and there with submissive patience expect further directions. To this heavenly vision the blinded and humbled persecutor was not disobedient. Three days he spent at Damascus, darkling and fasting: but they were days of high import to his future destiny. His time was not misemployed: "Behold," said the Lord himself to Ananias, "behold, he prayeth." Such supplications, fervent and sincere and intense, did not return to him unanswered. Ananias was sent to instruct him in the Gospel: he forthwith received his sight: he arose, and was baptized, thus mystically washing away his sins.*

Such is the history of the apostle's conversion: and now the question is, At what time did he become regenerate? Was it during the three days of blindness and supplication, which preceded his baptism; or was it in the article of his baptism itself? An answer will readily be obtained, if the following reasonable postulate be granted.

As a man cannot perform any natural acts *anterior* to his natural birth; so, analogically, a man cannot perform any spiritual acts *anterior* to his spiritual birth.

The reason in each case is precisely the same. An

* Acts ix. 1-18; xxii. 16.

effect cannot subsist *prior* to its cause: and we might just as well say, that a man can perform natural actions before he is naturally born, as that a man can perform spiritual actions before he is spiritually born.

The question now becomes narrowed to this: did St. Paul perform any spiritual actions during the three days which preceded his baptism?

I would not build too much upon his obedience, or upon his apparently submissive exclamation, "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" because both of these might be produced by the mere operation of servile terror: but I would build upon the testimony, which Christ himself bears of his future apostle: "Behold, he prayeth." Now, as I have just had occasion to observe from Scripture, the very prayer of the unregenerate is an abomination to God. The prayer therefore of St. Paul, thus commended by his divine Master, who knows the very secrets of our hearts, cannot have been the formal or terror-wrung prayer of the wicked: for such a prayer most assuredly would not have been mentioned in terms of approbation. Consequently, the prayer of St. Paul was a truly spiritual act: whence we may safely conclude, that his submissive obedience was likewise a spiritual act, and was not solely extorted from him by irreligious terror. St. Paul therefore performed spiritual acts during the three days *anterior* to his baptism. But no one can perform spiritual acts, unless he be first a spiritual person: and no one can become a spiritual person except by regeneration; for regeneration, as the very term implies, is the commencing point of the spiritual life. St. Paul, however, performed spiritual acts during the three days *anterior* to his baptism. Therefore he must have been regenerated when he performed such acts. Hence we finally arrive at the conclusion, that he was regenerated *anterior* to his baptism.

This conclusion can only be set aside by the self-contradictory assertion, that an unregenerate or non-spiritual man can yet perform spiritual actions; for the actions of

St. Paul during the three days were undeniably spiritual: in other words, the conclusion can only be set aside by vigorously maintaining the portentous proposition that effects may *precede* their causes.

Such being the case, our conclusion is not invalidated by the language of Ananias, "Arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins."* The washing away of sins, here attributed to the baptism of St. Paul, plainly cannot be understood as denoting that the apostle was still in the gall of bitterness and in the bond of iniquity; for he had already performed spiritual deeds which had received the approbation of Christ himself, and consequently must have been a spiritual or regenerate person. We must therefore, if we would make Scripture consistent with itself, interpret the expression, as only intimating in the technical language of theology, that St. Paul, in order to his being publicly admitted into the Church, must submit to the initiatory rite of baptism; which, in his case as well as in every other case, mystically shadowed out the washing away of his sins. To adopt the judicious distinction of Bishop Hopkins, though he had already been internally regenerated and thus literally cleansed from his sins; he had still need, in the face of the Church, to be *externally* or *baptismally* regenerated, and thus *mystically* or *figuratively* washed from his impurities.†

A fourth instance may well be deemed sufficient to complete the argument; that of the pious Nathanael, as it stands recorded by St. John.

After Philip had conversed with Jesus, and was satisfied that he was indeed the predicted Messiah, he forthwith imparted his momentous discovery to Nathanael. This person, sincere in his inquiries, though prejudiced against the country of our Lord, hastily exclaimed, "Can any good thing come out of Nazareth?" His friend very rationally advised him to come and see. To this he assented; and

* Acts xxii. 16.

† Bishop Hopkins's Works, p. 519.

then it was that Jesus made that memorable declaration respecting him, "Behold an Israelite indeed, in whom is no guile!" A short conversation with the object of his search convinced him, that Philip had judged rightly as to the character of our Saviour; and he then unreservedly made his confession, "Rabbi, thou art the Son of God, thou art the king of Israel."*

The whole of this transaction occurred no doubt previous to the baptism of Nathanael; the question therefore is, Was he, at the time of its occurrence, a regenerate or an unregenerate man?

Christ, we see, pronounces him with the voice of infallibility to have been "an Israelite indeed." Now I see not what we can understand by such an expression except this: that Nathanael was an Israelite, not merely in the letter, but likewise in the spirit; that he was one of God's people, not solely by natural descent from Jacob, but likewise by internal communion with Jacob's Lord. The expression, in short, seems evidently to convey the identical doctrine, which St. Paul sets forth somewhat more at large: "He is not a Jew, which is one outwardly; neither is that circumcision, which is outward in the flesh; but he is a Jew, which is one inwardly; and circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit and not in the letter, whose praise is not of men, but of God."† If then, previous to his baptism, Nathanael was "an Israelite indeed," or an Israelite internally, as contradistinguished from an Israelite nationally or an Israelite externally, he clearly must have been a spiritual child of God; that is to say in other words, he must have been regenerated by the Holy Spirit. But such is declared by our Lord himself to have been the condition of Nathanael previous to his baptism. Therefore he must have been regenerated *before* he was baptized. Consequently, regeneration is *not* inseparably united to baptism.

* John i. 43-49.

† Rom. ii. 28, 29.

Nor do either the ignorance or the prejudice of Nathanael at all invalidate this conclusion. A real change in the heart and the affections may undoubtedly have taken place, while the intellect is as yet very imperfectly illuminated; just as, conversely, the intellect may have been speculatively illuminated in a very high degree, while no change whatsoever has taken place in the heart and the affections. Where the soul has been disposed to an honest and sincere desire of serving God, though as yet it may be considerably in the dark as to the proper mode; that soul has manifestly taken the first step in the path of holiness: that soul therefore has certainly been born again from above; for regeneration is the commencement of sanctification. Such was the case of Nathanael; and, in his case, as in all other similar cases, intellectual illumination is speedily superadded to an honest and devout purpose.

(3.) We have now seen from direct scriptural examples, which cannot easily be gainsaid, that regeneration sometimes takes place before baptism, and sometimes without any baptism at all administered either before or after the internal change. If then an instance can be further produced of a person's having been duly baptized and of his yet remaining unregenerate notwithstanding his baptism, the argument, I conceive, will be as complete as can be desired.

In the same book of the Acts, which has already furnished us with three examples, the remarkable history of Simon Magus stands very fully recorded. Adopting the oriental theology, which taught that at certain successive intervals the universal hero-god descends from heaven and becomes incarnate in a mortal figure, this person, we are told, infatuated the people of Samaria, and gave out that he himself was a manifestation of the great father or of the great divine power. The Samaritans, whose worship was a strange compound of Judaism with the idolatry of

their Eastern forefathers,* readily gave heed to him; for the tenor of his imposture exactly chimed in with their national superstition. Such a plan no doubt was highly lucrative to him; and his only object seems to have been to insure its perpetuity. Accordingly, when Philip preached the things concerning the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ, and when he confirmed the truth of his mission by various signs and miracles, Simon was astonished at his supernatural powers, and readily believed him to be a genuine messenger of Heaven. This led to his baptism; but his motive for requesting to partake of that holy rite soon became sufficiently apparent. He duly continued with Philip after he had been baptized: and his whole attention was occupied by the astonishing miracles which he daily witnessed. At length Peter and John themselves were sent down by the apostles to complete the labours of Philip; and, by the imposition of their hands, the extraordinary gifts of the Holy Ghost were communicated to those who had been baptized. Simon, among the rest, appears to have received these miraculous powers; but he was not content without also possessing the faculty of conferring them upon others. Hence he offered money to the two apostles, in order that he also might be enabled to confer the Holy Ghost on whomsoever he chose to lay his hands. This nefarious proposal called forth the well-merited rebuke of St. Peter—"Thy money perish with thee, because thou hast thought that the gift of God may be purchased with money. Thou hast neither part nor lot in this matter; for thy heart is not right in the sight of God. Repent therefore of this thy wickedness, and pray God, if perhaps the thought of thine heart may be forgiven thee. For I perceive, that thou art in the gall of bitterness and in the bond of iniquity."†

Such is the history of Simon; we have now to inquire, whether it gives us any warrant for believing, that he was

* 2 Kings xvii. 24-41.

† Acts viii. 20-23.

spiritually regenerated at the precise time when he was outwardly baptized.

It will obviously strike even the most superficial observer, that the character which the inspired apostle has infallibly given us of the baptized sorcerer is not the character of one who has been regenerated by the Holy Spirit; for it is impossible to conceive that one who has been indeed brought out of darkness into God's marvellous light, should yet have neither part nor lot in the gospel, should be cursed with a heart not right in the sight of God, and should actually be in the very gall of bitterness and in the very bond of iniquity. A person thus described certainly cannot, in the judgment of St. Peter, have been a truly regenerate and sanctified believer.

But it may be said, that the sorcerer was indeed spiritually regenerated in the article of baptism, but that unhappily he afterwards fell away from his high privilege.

To judge how far this is probable, we must attend to his previous conduct.

Now every part of that conduct seems most distinctly to prove, that the man from first to last never had a grain of true religion, but that he was altogether influenced by a base and sordid love of gain. Before the descent of Philip, he had established a lucrative imposture among the besotted Samaritans. The wonderful miracles, not the pure doctrines, of the holy deacon attracted his attention: and the mere force of evidence compelled him theoretically to believe that he conversed with a servant of the Most High God. In hopes of acquiring the power of working such miracles, which he clearly saw would be not a little profitable to him, and which would mightily further his main project of a gainful theological imposture, he readily submitted to be baptized: and, having thus obtained a direct and creditable introduction to Philip, he never quitted his side. But why did he thus continue with him? Was it, that he might incessantly hear from his lips the words of eternal life? No such thing: we

read not a syllable of his zeal for instruction or of his ardent aspirations after holiness; but we are told, that the new convert "wondered, beholding the miracles and signs which were done." These were the lure which attracted him to Philip: these were the endowments which his soul thirsted after. Presently he conversed with two extraordinary men, who not only possessed such endowments themselves, but enjoyed the yet more wonderful power of communicating them to others. And now the cupidity of the sorcerer could be no longer restrained. "Your holiness I want not: your promises of a blissful immortality I regard not. My wishes are turned to far different objects. Accept my money; and give me also this power, that on whomsoever I lay hands he may receive the Holy Ghost. Having acquired this lucrative faculty, wealth and honour and empire lie all before me." The whole man stands here revealed in all his naked deformity. His drift, from beginning to end, was to make a gainful merchandise of his baptism. Not the slightest hint is given that he had any other object in view: not a single feature in his character evinces any change of heart. From first to last, the man is consistent.

To suppose, indeed, without a shadow of evidence, that Simon was spiritually regenerated in baptism; that he then became altogether a new creature; and that yet, in the short space necessary for the news of Philip's success among the Samaritans to be conveyed to Jerusalem and for Peter and John to travel into Samaria, he should so entirely forfeit his recently engrafted character, as to merit the tremendous rebuke of the apostle: to suppose all this, in direct opposition to the obvious purport of the whole history, is to suppose such a monstrous combination of contrarieties, such an astonishing instance of precipitate depravity, such a strange leap from the highest good to the worst evil, as must needs make bankrupt the faith even of credulity itself. Simon, though baptized, was plainly never regenerated. Like the early antichrists

mentioned by St. John, one of whom there is sufficient reason to believe was this identical sorcerer, he went out from the faithful, but he was not of them: for if he had been of them, he would no doubt have continued with them: but he went out that he might be made manifest that he was not of them.*

But, if the baptized Simon was never regenerated: then once more we must conclude, that baptism and regeneration are not inseparable.

II. The sum, in short, of the whole argument may be reduced to the following syllogisms.

1. (1.) Without regeneration it is impossible to enter into the kingdom of heaven: because regeneration is the commencing point of sanctification; and, without holiness, no man shall see the Lord.

(2.) But, if it be impossible to enter into the kingdom of heaven without regeneration; then all, who do enter into the kingdom of heaven, must have been regenerated.

(3.) Now the penitent malefactor on the cross certainly entered into the kingdom of heaven; because Christ himself promised that he should.

(4.) Therefore the penitent malefactor must have been previously regenerated.

(5.) But the penitent malefactor was never baptized.

(6.) Therefore the penitent malefactor was regenerated without the intervention of baptism.

(7.) Consequently, we have a direct scriptural proof, that baptism and regeneration are not inseparable.

2. (1.) If it can be shown, that a person has been regenerated before baptism; then baptism and regeneration are not inseparably united.

(2.) But it has been proved, that the centurion Cornelius, the devout Lydia, the apostle St. Paul, and the guileless Nathanael, were regenerated before baptism.

* 1 John ii. 18, 19.

(3.) Therefore baptism and regeneration are not inseparably united.

3. (1.) If it can be proved that any person has received the outward visible sign of baptism, and that he did not at the same time receive the inward spiritual grace of regeneration; then baptism and regeneration are not inseparable.

(2.) But it has been shown, that Simon Magus was duly baptized, and yet that he still remained unregenerate.

(3.) Therefore, finally, baptism and regeneration are not inseparable.

III. Thus it appears from direct scriptural authority, that regeneration may subsist without baptism, and that baptism may subsist without regeneration.

Hence it will follow, that regeneration may take place at any indefinite point of a man's life; either before baptism, or in the article of baptism, or after baptism. This great change of heart must indeed be necessarily experienced by every fallen creature, in order to his entering into the kingdom of heaven; because, without such a change, it is impossible in the very nature of things, that he could enjoy happiness in the presence of a Holy God. But to assert, that regeneration is so inseparably tied to baptism that *all* the baptized are regenerate and *all* the unbaptized unregenerate, that regeneration therefore *invariably* takes place in the article of baptism, and consequently that it is nugatory to expect *any* spiritual regeneration after the outward rite of baptism has been duly administered; to assert such a theory as this, is to advocate a mere unauthorized human speculation, which rests not on a more solid basis than the transubstantiation of the Romanists, and which is alike irreconcilable with experience and with right reason and with analogy and with Scripture.

SERMON III.

ROMANS ii. 28, 29.

It has now been shown at large, that the doctrine of the inseparability of baptism and regeneration is a fond notion, which will not bear the test of sober inquiry, and which bids defiance alike to experience and right reason and analogy and Scripture. Here, therefore, so far as the *general* interests of truth are concerned, the argument might well be closed; for, if the doctrine in question be advocated or maintained by any particular church, such a circumstance would indeed prove that church to be in error, but it neither would nor could prove an unorthodox doctrine to be an orthodox one. Yet, though nothing more (it is trusted) need be said for the satisfaction of a member of the Catholic Church, it may be desirable to push the inquiry somewhat further, for the satisfaction of many who profess themselves members of the Church of England.

Nothing is more common in the present day, than to hear it asserted, with equal confidence and pertinacity, that the doctrine of the inseparability of baptism and regeneration is the genuine doctrine of the Anglican Church, that those who oppose it are unsound members of that church, that their opposition is the mere effervescence of a heated imagination, and that it cannot for one moment be made good on the principles of calm and sober scriptural reasoning.

As for the last part of the assertion, we have seen, with what perfect facility it may be retorted upon those, who

perhaps somewhat too incautiously have indulged themselves in the habit of making it; we have seen, that it is in fact the doctrine of the inseparability of baptism and regeneration, not the doctrine of their separability, which cannot be maintained on the ground either of Scripture or of right reason; we have seen, that it is the former tenet, not the latter, which is convicted of resting on a not more solid basis than a mere unrestrained imagination; for, if we assert a point, which we can prove neither from Scripture nor from experience, I see not by what better foundation such an assertion is supported than an unchastised superstitious fancy.

Let us now, therefore, proceed to consider the former part of the often made assertion before us: namely, that the doctrine of the inseparability of baptism and regeneration is the *genuine doctrine of the Anglican Church*.

I. The reformers of our national church were men of great good sense, of exemplary piety, and of a deep acquaintance with the Holy Scriptures. Hence we must not lightly believe, that they maintained a doctrine marked with such very extraordinary characteristics as that before us.

1. The ground, usually taken by those who assert the inseparability of baptism and regeneration to be the genuine doctrine of the Church of England, is a peculiar phraseology which pervades the whole of her baptismal services.

Previous to the administration of the sacrament itself, she directs the officiating minister to call upon God in behalf of the infant about to be baptized, that "he, coming to his holy baptism, may receive remission of his sins by spiritual regeneration:" and she further teaches him to pray, that the same gracious being would "give his Holy Spirit to the infant, that he may be born again and be made an heir of everlasting salvation." When the ceremony has been performed, the minister is required to ask the prayers of the congregation, that the "child may

lead the rest of his life according to this beginning;" on the express ground, that the child is now "regenerate and grafted into the body of Christ's Church." And lastly, in perfect accordance with the charge, he is enjoined to return thanks to Almighty God for the great and good work which has been wrought in the infant at baptism: "We yield thee hearty thanks, most merciful Father, that it hath pleased thee to regenerate this infant with thy Holy Spirit, to receive him for thine own child by adoption, and to incorporate him into thy holy church." The office for adult baptism is marked by an exactly similar phraseology; so that, whatever applies to the one, applies equally to the other.

Now it is argued, that since the minister first prays that the person about to be baptized may be regenerated, since he then proceeds to baptize him, and since he next immediately afterwards returns thanks to God for having regenerated him: it is argued, that, in the judgment of the Anglican Church, as expressed in these offices, the regeneration of every baptized subject takes place in the article of baptism.

2. This argument is sufficiently plausible; and I have endeavoured, in my statement of it, to give it all the force that I can: perhaps, however, on examination, it may turn out to be more plausible than solid.

That baptism is the outward sign of regeneration, and that regeneration may sometimes take place at baptism, is denied, I believe, by no one: neither, I apprehend, will it be denied, that the public offices of a national church must inevitably be composed in general terms. Now the pious framers of our Liturgy could not possibly determine, whether this or that particular baptized infant, either in their own days or in the days which have followed them, was or was not likewise regenerated in baptism: and as little could any individual priest speak positively on the subject. Neither again could the framers of our Liturgy ascertain, whether this or that particular baptized adult

to the end of time would or would not be also regenerated in baptism: nor, as they well knew, would it have been prudent in them to devolve upon the clergy the difficult and invidious task, of deciding upon the spiritual state of each adult immediately after his baptism whether he had or had not been then regenerated, and of discretionally varying the conclusion of the service accordingly. On this obvious principle then our baptismal offices have been composed. The outward visible sign admits the catechumens into the visible church of Christ: the inward spiritual grace admits him into that invisible church, which consists of those only who have been sanctified by the blessed Spirit. But the former is confessedly the symbol of the latter: and the two may, without doubt, be received at the same time. Hence, as it were both dangerous and endless to subject the baptismal offices to be perpetually altered at the discretion of the priest, so as literally to suit this or that particular case; the church, in the judgment and hope of charity, speaks generally of all the baptized as being likewise regenerated.

(1.) In adopting this principle, which in fact is the only principle that can be adopted in constructing offices designed for public use, she is sanctioned, both by the high authority of Scripture, and by that ordinary phraseology which is perfectly familiar to us in secular affairs.

St. Paul addresses one of his public epistles “to *all* that be in Rome, beloved of God, called to be saints.”* Another of them he addresses “unto the church of God which is at Corinth, to them that are sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints.”† A third he addresses to “the saints which are at Ephesus;” whom, in conjunction with himself, he characterizes, without any exception, as persons whom “God hath chosen in Christ before the foundation of the world that they should be holy and without blame before him in love:” whence he speaks to them *all*, still

* Rom. i. 7.

† 1 Cor. i. 2.

without any exception, as “those whom God hath quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins.”* And a fourth he addresses “to the church of the Thessalonians, which is in God the Father and in the Lord Jesus Christ;” adding immediately afterwards, “We give thanks to God always for you *all*, knowing, brethren beloved, your election of God.”† Exactly the same general phraseology is employed by St. Peter. He addresses the first of his epistles “to the strangers scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia, elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through sanctification of the Spirit, unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ:” he then blesses God for having “begotten us again,” namely, both himself and them, without specifying a single exception, “unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled:” and he afterwards speaks of them *all*, as “having purified their souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit;” and as “being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God which liveth and abideth for ever.”‡

Now, without prying too curiously into the strict meaning of the word *elect*, and without at all pledging ourselves to adopt what is styled the Calvinistic interpretation of the term; it is impossible not to see, that the persons thus designated are characterized, as having been born again, and as having been brought to a life of holy obedience through the sanctification of the Spirit: and it is equally impossible not to see, that these various communities of Christians are all alike described, as being thus universally circumstanced, without any provisions or individual exceptions whatsoever. Are we then hastily to conclude, from the generalized phraseology of these public documents, that *all* in Rome were beloved of God and called to be saints? Are we to conclude, that *every* member of the

* Eph. i. 1, 4; ii. 1.

† 1 Thess. i. 1, 2, 4.

‡ 1 Pet. i. 1-4, 22, 23.

Corinthian Church was sanctified in Christ Jesus? Are we to conclude, that *all* the Ephesians were chosen in Christ that they should be holy; that *all*, without a single exception, were of the number of those whom God hath quickened? Are we to conclude, that, when the apostle gave thanks for *all* the Thessalonians, professing himself to know assuredly their election of God; his intention was to intimate that their church contained not one unregenerate and unsound member? Or lastly, are we to conclude from the sweeping phraseology of St. Peter, that *all* the strangers, scattered through many extensive provinces, had "purified their souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit," had "been born again," and had "been elected through sanctification of the Spirit unto obedience?" It is to be feared, that, neither ecclesiastical history nor the many sharp reprimands scattered through the apostolical letters will warrant any such wild and incredible inference. Heresy and corruption existed from the very beginning: yet, if we torture the general phraseology of Peter and Paul into a strictly individual sense, as some would torture the kindred general phraseology of the Anglican baptismal offices, we may easily prove, that in the golden age of the Catholic Church not a single member made shipwreck of the faith. We have merely to adopt the same mode of reasoning, which has been deemed so conclusive in the case of the baptismal offices, and the matter is accomplished. An English clergyman speaks of *every* baptized child, as having been regenerated: therefore, in the judgment of the Anglican Church *every* baptized child is regenerated. St. Peter and St. Paul speak of *every* member in the several churches which they address, as having been born again and sanctified by the Spirit and elected to eternal salvation through the medium of a holy obedience: therefore *every* member in those several churches was a truly religious person, and has infallibly been admitted into the kingdom of heaven. If one of these conclusions be valid, the other is equally so: and, if one

of them be invalid, the solidity of the other cannot be much depended upon.

The fact is, that in both cases general phraseology is employed, as it ever must be employed, in public documents; and so universal is this rule, that it applies to secular matters just as much as to religious. If we were gravely to argue, that, in the undoubted judgment of the king and his ministers, there was not so much as a single disaffected person in this happy land, because its sovereign in general proclamations characterizes *all* his subjects, without any exception, as equally loving; if, I say, we were thus gravely to argue, whatever might be thought of the cogency of our reasoning, the *principle* of our argument would be the very same as the principle of that redoubted argument, which has been thought irrefragably to prove that the doctrine of the inseparability of baptism and regeneration is the true doctrine of the Church of England.

(2.) General phraseology, as might naturally be expected, is by no means exclusively characteristic of the baptismal offices; it more or less pervades all the public documents of the church; and in each instance, common sense teaches us that it must be interpreted in the same manner.

Thus *every* child, without exception, is taught in the catechism to profess his belief "in God the Holy Ghost, who sanctifieth him and all the elect people of God:" but are we thence perversely to set it down as the sober opinion of our church, that every child, who repeats the Catechism, is sanctified by the Holy Spirit and fitted through obedience to enter into eternal life? Woful experience proves but too decisively, that many a child duly repeats this passage who exhibits not the least evidence of sanctification.

Thus *every* person who partakes of the Lord's Supper, is taught to say with the congregation, "We do earnestly repent, and are heartily sorry for these our misdoings; the remembrance of them is grievous unto us, the burden of them

is intolerable:" but are we thence to argue with absurd solemnity, that the church clearly maintains every communicant, no matter what the general tenor of life is, to be animated by these truly Christian sentiments? The truth is, that she ascribes to her members sentiments, which as regenerate believers they all *ought* to feel, not which they all really do feel.

Thus again, in the burial service, the priest, in the name of the congregation, "gives hearty thanks to God, for that it hath pleased him to deliver this our brother out of the miseries of this sinful world;" and beseeches him, that "he would shortly accomplish the number of his elect and hasten his kingdom;" but are we from such phraseology to contend, that, in the deliberate judgment of the Anglican Church, every person, committed to the dust by one of her ministers, would indubitably be such a gainer by his death, as to have reason to rejoice that he had been delivered from the miseries of this sinful world? The gross absurdity of such an inference is immediately perceived; yet it is by an exactly similar process, that the church is demonstrated to uphold the unscriptural doctrine of the inseparability of baptism and regeneration. Every baptized person is spoken of, as regenerate; every buried person is spoken of, as having exchanged this world for a better. Hence, if we conclude that the church really maintains the actual regeneration of every baptized person; I see not how we can consistently avoid concluding also, that the church really maintains the actual salvation of every one who receives what is styled Christian burial. As the premises are in both cases alike, the conclusions must in both cases be the same.

II. We must not however forget, that the baptismal offices are not the whole liturgy, and that even the whole liturgy is by no means the only public authorized document of the Church of England. She employs other prayers, as well as those contained in the baptismal offices; and in addition to the entire liturgy, she has likewise put forth a brief Catechism for the systematic instruction of

her younger members, a regular body of well-digested Articles, and two codes of more copiously explanatory Homilies. We must therefore attend to other parts of the liturgy, as well as to the baptismal offices. Nor is this all. As the additional documents, which accompany the liturgy, profess to give a complete systematic statement of the theological tenets which she has judged it proper to adopt; we must obviously, should the liturgy be less explicit or somewhat ambiguous, rather have recourse to them for an accurate and scholastic exposition of her doctrines, than to the more popular and less definite composition of a form of prayer. Hence, if there be any apparent difference between the several documents of the Anglican Church, we ought to gather her genuine doctrines, rather from those writings in which she specially professes to define them with logical accuracy, than from those which are of a more loose and popular nature. I mean not to say, that there is any real discrepance; for the passages in the baptismal offices ought manifestly, I think, to be understood in the sense which I have ascribed to them; but I would without hesitation assert, that, supposing there to be a real discrepance, we ought to deduce the fixed sentiments of our church from the Catechism and the Articles and the Homilies, rather than from any particular office in the liturgy.

Now, in these more scholastic compositions, we either find a total silence preserved respecting the alleged inseparability of baptism and regeneration, or we find a doctrine in perfect opposition to such a theory expressly advanced. And again, in certain parts of the liturgy, we may observe petitions framed upon the manifest adoption of a theory quite the reverse of that, which has too hastily been thought to be supported by the phraseology of the baptismal offices.

1. The Church of England, being fully aware that many of her adult members may not yet have been spiritually regenerated, though in their infancy they have been regu-

larly baptized with water, has judiciously provided in her liturgy more than a single prayer for that radical change of heart, which our Lord styles a new birth.

(1.) One of these petitions will be found in the collect for the Circumcision of Christ.

“Almighty God, who madest thy blessed Son to be circumcised and obedient to the law for man, grant us the true circumcision of the Spirit; that, our hearts and all our members being mortified from all worldly and carnal lusts, we may in all things obey thy blessed will, through the same thy Son Jesus Christ our Lord.”

In this excellent prayer, persons, who have been long since outwardly baptized, are yet directed to supplicate the Almighty, that he *would grant* to them the true circumcision of the Spirit. Now what is that circumcision of the Spirit, to which the church here alludes? It may seem almost like mere trifling to go about formally to demonstrate its identity with spiritual regeneration; yet, rather than any thing should be omitted, I will readily submit to this charge.

The church, in the collect now before us, defines spiritual circumcision to be a mortification or a deadening of our hearts and members from all worldly and carnal lusts. But this is the precise definition, which she likewise gives of spiritual regeneration. For she states the inward and spiritual grace, symbolized by the outward and literal washing of the baptismal water, to be “a *death* or a *mortification* unto sin and a *new birth* unto righteousness;”^{*} and she instructs her clergy to pray in behalf of every child brought to be baptized, that “all carnal affections may *die* in him; and that he being *dead* unto sin, may crucify the old man and utterly abolish the whole body of sin.”[†] But, if in the judgment of the church, spiritual circumcision and spiritual regeneration be alike a death unto sin or a mortification of the heart from all worldly and carnal lusts;

* Catechism.

† Baptismal Office.

then they must plainly be mutually the same with each other. Accordingly, by way of distinctly showing what her judgment is in this matter, she has aptly selected, as a proper lesson for the festival of the Circumcision, the second chapter of the Epistle to the Romans; in which St. Paul specially sets forth the difference between outward circumcision in the flesh and that inward circumcision of the heart which had already been insisted upon by Moses and the prophets. It has however been the unanimous opinion of all her best divines, that literal circumcision corresponds with literal baptism, and spiritual circumcision with spiritual regeneration.* Nor can there be the least doubt, that St. Paul, and the Church of England after him, consider the two under this identical aspect.

When that church, therefore, provides a prayer for spiritual circumcision, she in effect provides a prayer for spiritual regeneration. But it is plainly her intention that this prayer should be used by those baptized adult members of her communion, to whose case it may be suitable. Now in this prayer she directs those baptized adult members of her communion to supplicate God, that he *would grant* to them the grace of spiritual regeneration. If then she directs them to pray for regeneration, she must inevitably suppose them to be as yet destitute of it. But the members, whom she thus directs to pray, are *baptized* adults. Therefore, in the judgment of the English Church, many persons may have been outwardly baptized in their infancy, *without* being inwardly circumcised or regenerated by the Holy Spirit.

It is worthy of observation, that this collect, like the baptismal offices, is couched in general terms. Hence, if we are to argue, from the phraseology of the baptismal offices, that *all* baptized persons are regenerate; we may just as well argue from the phraseology of the collect,

* See Burnet on the XXXIX. Articles: Art. xxvii. Bishop Hall's Works: Dec. v. Epist. 4. Usher's Body of Divin. pp. 388, 394.

that no baptized persons are regenerate. The collect is appointed to be used by the minister and the whole congregation of every parish-church throughout the realm of England. Consequently, if we think fit to argue, that the collect is appointed to be *generally* used; that it contains a petition for spiritual regeneration; that the offering up of such a prayer necessarily implies that all who use it are destitute of spiritual regeneration; and, therefore, that all the members of the English Church thus using it, are manifestly, in the judgment of that church, thus destitute: if, I say, we should think fit to argue in such a manner from the generalized form of the prayer; we should argue just as those persons do, who from the phraseology of the baptismal offices would prove, that in the judgment of the English Church *all* the baptized are *ipso facto* regenerate. The absurdity of this mode of reasoning appears at once, if we apply it to the collect: but why it should be very absurd in one case, and very wise in another, is not easy to comprehend. Doubtless, both the collect and the baptismal offices ought to be understood in the very same generalized sense. They are couched indeed, as all public liturgical forms must be, in general terms: but, in their strict literal import, they are alike applicable only to particular individuals. The church no more means to teach by the phraseology of the baptismal offices, that *all* the baptized are regenerate; than she means to teach by the phraseology of the collect that *all* her praying members are unregenerate.

(2.) The tenor of the collect for the Circumcision will teach us, how we ought to understand the closely connected collect for the Nativity.

“Almighty God, who hast given us thy only begotten Son to take our nature upon him and as at this time to be born of a pure virgin; grant, that we, being regenerate and made thy children by adoption and grace, may daily be renewed by thy Holy Spirit, through the same our Lord Jesus Christ.”

The construction of this prayer is somewhat ambiguous: for the clause, "*being* regenerate and made thy children by adoption and grace," may import, either a petition for regeneration, or an assertion that it has already been received; according as the participle *being* is taken in a future or a present sense. Those, therefore, who contend for the inseparability of Baptism and Regeneration, contend of course for the retrospective and not for the prospective interpretation of the clause.

Now I am inclined to think, that the closely parallel collect for the Circumcision will go a good way towards settling this dispute. That collect is unambiguously a prayer *for* regeneration: and it contains a clause of a structure exactly similar to the litigated clause in the other collect: "our hearts and all our members *being* mortified from all worldly and carnal lusts." In this clause, the participle *being* bears undoubtedly a future sense: because the clause contains a definition of the spiritual circumcision, for which supplication is made. Hence there is at least a strong presumption, that the same participle *being*, in the parallel clause of the other collect, was meant to be similarly understood in a future sense also. But, if this be the case; then, so far as that presumption avails, the litigated clause in the collect for the Nativity ought to be interpreted prospectively, and not retrospectively: that is to say, the collect is a petition *for* regeneration, not an assertion that all who use it are already regenerated. Accordingly, the venerable Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge judiciously determine in favour of the prospective sense: as we may unequivocally gather from one of their authorized tracts, containing an alphabetical table of the collects reduced under proper heads, in which the collect for the Nativity is described as being a prayer for regeneration. The same likewise is the determination of Wheatley, though not expressed quite so definitely: for he says, that "in this collect the church teaches us to pray that *we may be* partakers of the benefit of Christ's

birth.”* Now the benefit, specially, set forth in the collect, is regeneration. If, therefore, we pray for that benefit, we of course pray for regeneration. And this I take to be the real meaning of the collect, analogously to the undoubted meaning of the collect for the Circumcision.

2. From the liturgy, let us pass to the Catechism.

(1.) In this manual, a sacrament generally, and therefore no doubt the particular sacrament of baptism, is defined to be “an outward and visible sign of an inward and spiritual grace, given unto us, ordained by Christ himself, as a means whereby we receive the same and a pledge to assure us thereof.”

Neither in the present very accurate definition, nor in any thing that follows, is there a single syllable advanced respecting a pretended inseparability of the outward sign and the inward grace. In the case of each sacrament alike, the outward sign is merely pronounced to symbolize the inward grace. As to their inseparability, a profound silence is in this place at least certainly preserved. They are not indeed denied to be inseparable, but neither are they asserted to be so.

(2.) Perhaps, however, it may be said, that the outward sign is specified to be, not only a mean whereby we receive the inward grace, but likewise a pledge to assure us of it. Whence it may be argued, that the outward sign is at once, a channel through which we may expect to receive the inward grace, and moreover a pledge to assure us of its actual reception. But, if it be both one and the other, if it be both a channel for reception and a pledge of reception; the notion of inseparability seems at any rate to be strongly implied in such phraseology, if not absolutely expressed in so many words.

To this I reply that the definition before us purports to be the definition of a sacrament in general, not of the baptismal sacrament in particular; hence it is a definition,

* Wheatley on the Common Prayer, p. 193. Oxon.

which alike respects both baptism and the Lord's Supper; and, consequently, whatever it sets forth, touches the one just as much as the other. Such being the case, if, from the expressions now under consideration, we are to infer the inseparability of the outward sign and the inward grace in baptism; we are equally bound to infer the inseparability of the outward sign and the inward grace in the Lord's Supper; and, conversely, if we are not to infer from them the inseparability of the outward sign and the inward grace in the Lord's Supper; then neither are we warranted in inferring from them the inseparability of the outward sign and the inward grace in baptism. But the church positively declares it to be her judgment, that the outward sign in the Lord's Supper may be received without any participation of the inward grace.* Therefore she maintains, that the outward sign and the inward grace in the Lord's Supper are *not* inseparable. If then such be her opinion, the expressions in the Catechism, relative to the outward sign in a sacrament in general being both a mean of receiving the inward grace and a pledge to assure us of its actual reception, cannot possibly be meant to assert the inseparability of the sign and the grace; because this interpretation of them, by proving too much, would exhibit the church as palpably contradicting herself. For, a sacrament in general being the subject of the definition, if the expressions in question assert the inseparability of the sign and the grace, they necessarily assert it in the case of each sacrament in particular. But the church declares, that the sign and the grace are not inseparable in the Lord's Supper. Therefore the expressions in question must not be understood as asserting, in the case of the Lord's Supper, their inseparability. But, if they assert not their inseparability in the Lord's Supper, then neither do they assert their inseparability in baptism. For the expressions occur in the definition of a sacrament in general. There-

* Art. xxix.

fore they must be interpreted homogeneously in regard to each sacrament in particular. For, by no rule of sound criticism, can we be allowed to say, that the expressions assert indeed the inseparability of the outward sign and the inward grace in the sacrament of baptism, but that they do not assert the inseparability of the outward sign and the inward grace in the sacrament of the Lord's Supper.

(3.) Thus it is clear, that, whatever may be the purport of the expressions before us, they cannot be consistently interpreted, as maintaining the inseparability of the outward sign and the inward grace in baptism. The meaning of them, therefore, I take to be this: that in each sacrament the outward sign is an appointed mean of obtaining the inward grace, though not an indispensable mean; and that it is likewise on God's part a pledge, that, in his own good time and so far as is consistent with his own providential dispensations, he will superadd the inward grace. More than this we cannot allow their meaning to be; because, otherwise, we shall be brought to the absurdity of maintaining, that the bread and wine in the Lord's Supper are an infallible pledge to the wicked who receive them that they shall thereby also partake of the inward grace.

(4.) So far then as the Catechism is concerned, instead of the inseparability of baptism and regeneration being asserted, it is in effect denied: for, as in a general definition of the term *sacrament*, baptism and the Lord's Supper are placed exactly upon the same footing with regard to their respective signs and things signified, and as in the Lord's Supper the sign and the thing signified are confessedly not inseparable; the obvious inference is, that we are to understand such also to be the case with the sacrament of baptism.

3. If from the Catechism we proceed to the Articles, our search for the pretended inseparability of the outward sign

and the inward grace in the baptismal sacrament will be equally fruitless.

The Articles furnish us with two definitions respecting baptism, the one general and the other particular: and they likewise contain an explanatory statement, which alone is sufficient to set the question at rest for ever.

(1.) The general definition regards of course both sacraments, and it is couched in the following terms:

“Sacraments ordained of Christ be not only badges or tokens of Christian men’s profession: but rather they be certain sure witnesses and effectual signs of grace and God’s good-will towards us, by the which he doth work invisibly in us, and doth not only quicken, but also strengthen and confirm, our faith in him.”*

On this definition it will be sufficient to remark, that, being a general one, no argument can be deduced from it to prove the inseparability of the outward sign and the inward grace in the one sacrament, which will not equally prove their inseparability in the other sacrament. But it is acknowledged that they are not inseparable in the sacrament of the Lord’s Supper. Therefore, the present definition cannot be adduced as proving their inseparability in the sacrament of baptism.

(2.) The particular definition, which regards baptism alone, runs as follows:

“Baptism is not only a sign of profession and mark of difference, whereby Christian men are discerned from others that be not christened: but it is also a sign of regeneration or new birth, whereby, as by an instrument, they that receive baptism rightly are grafted into the church, the promises of the forgiveness of sins and of our adoption to be the sons of God by the Holy Ghost are visibly signed and sealed, faith is confirmed, and grace is increased by virtue of prayer unto God.”†

In this definition it is not very easy to discover any

* Art. xxv.

† Art. xxvii.

assertion of the necessary inseparability of baptism and regeneration: if, however, some lynx-eyed inquirer should fancy that he does discern something of the kind, let him reconcile it, if he be able, with the explanatory statement which now remains to be brought forward.

(3.) The statement is this.

The sacraments, not one only, but *both* the sacraments: "the sacraments were not ordained of Christ to be gazed upon or to be carried about, but that we should duly use them. And, in such only as worthily receive the same, they have a wholesome effect and operation: but they, that receive them *unworthily*, purchase to themselves damnation."*

Now it is manifest, that in this statement the unorthodox doctrine of the inseparability of the outward sign and the inward grace is distinctly and explicitly disavowed. For we are positively assured, that, in the case of each sacrament, not solely the Lord's Supper, but baptism also: we are positively assured, that, in the case of each sacrament, a wholesome effect is produced by its administration only in such as worthily receive the same: whence it obviously and necessarily follows, that in such as do not worthily receive either sacrament, no wholesome effect is produced on the recipient by its administration. If then the sacrament of baptism be unworthily received, no wholesome effect (according to this explanatory statement) is experienced by the recipient: in other words, for such only can be the sense of the proposition, the person so baptized partakes of the outward visible sign without partaking of the inward invisible grace: that is to say, he is baptized *without* being regenerated. But, if he be baptized without being regenerated, which this authoritative statement of the Anglican Church declares to be the case with him; then it is the manifest decision of that church, that baptism and regeneration are *not* necessarily inseparable.

* Art. xxv.

From such a decision it inevitably follows, that regeneration, so far from being indissolubly tied to baptism, may take place in the soul long after baptism has been outwardly administered to the body. For, otherwise, what would be the condition of the man, who had been unworthily baptized, and who therefore (agreeably to the statement of the church, now before us) had not been regenerated? Are we to say, that such a subject is utterly incapable of any future regeneration; that his day of grace irrevocably passed away at baptism; that, as he was not then regenerated, he never can be regenerated; and, consequently, that, as he never can be regenerated, he never can enter into the kingdom of heaven? Are we to saddle the venerable Church of England with such gross and impious absurdities as these? Surely not; but what then will follow? Why, no doubt, the conclusion, that regeneration may take place long after the outward administration of baptism. The church supposes the case of an unworthy recipient of baptism; and determines most rationally, that such a recipient is not thereby regenerated. She presumes not however to limit God's mercy: nor does she arrogantly decide, that this recipient of the external sign can never be regenerated at all, because he has certainly not been regenerated in the article of baptism. On the contrary, she leaves us to infer, as common sense requires that we should infer, that what has hitherto been wanting may hereafter be supplied; that this unregenerated, though baptized, person may at some future period become regenerate; and that thus, by a spiritual new birth to which as yet he has been a stranger, he may be made meet for an inheritance with the glorified saints.

(4.) Here it may probably be said that such an expression as the unworthy reception of the baptismal sacrament, can only relate to adults, that infants cannot be baptized unworthily, and therefore that all baptized infants must also be regenerated.

To this it might be sufficient to reply, that the person, who uses such an argument, does, by his very use of it, completely give up the leading point in debate; namely, that baptism and regeneration are so necessarily inseparable that it is folly to expect any regeneration subsequent to baptism: for, being compelled to acknowledge that in the judgment of the Anglican Church an adult may be baptized without being regenerated, he merely attempts to take refuge behind the shield of pedobaptism, if that peradventure may afford him a temporary shelter. Such a reply would be sufficient: but I shall not let the matter rest here.

Our knowledge both of the divine government and of the nature of spirit is so very limited, that I see not how we can peremptorily determine beforehand as to the worthy or unworthy reception of baptism by any subject according to God's estimation of worthiness or unworthiness. We have no authority that I am aware of for dogmatically asserting, that every infant must, from the mere circumstance of its infancy, be a worthy recipient of baptism. Scripture and the church perfectly concur in declaring with one mouth, that we are all "by nature born in sin and the children of wrath," and that we continue in this miserable condition until we are "made the children of grace by a death unto sin and a new birth unto righteousness." Now, if such be the state of all infants before regeneration, and if no infants are regenerated until they be baptized, how can any infant whatsoever be a worthy recipient of baptism? Each infant plainly, according to the theory which makes regeneration the immediate consequence of pedobaptism, is a child of wrath at the precise moment of its being baptized; because the act of baptism immediately precedes the communicated grace of regeneration. But, if each infant be a child of wrath at the precise moment of its being baptized, which the present theory necessarily makes it to be; an infant, thus characterized, cannot be a worthy

recipient of baptism; unless we allow, that a person may be at once a worthy recipient of baptism and a child of wrath, which (so far as I can judge) involves a direct contradiction. Hence it is manifest, that, unless we can prove all infants to receive baptism worthily, we shall not much advance the cause of truth by only sturdily asserting that they do so receive it.

For my own part I venture not to pry into the mysteries of God's moral government, nor do I pretend to solve the immense difficulties which encompass that most intricate problem; this only I will say, that the experience of absolute matter of fact determines, that all baptized infants are not regenerated.

Our Lord has furnished us with a sure method of judging with respect to character; "by their fruits shall ye know them;" and his apostle has drawn out this brief sketch into a full-length picture, by exhibiting to us at large what are the deeds of the flesh and what the fruits of the Spirit; or, in other words, what are the distinguishing marks of the unregenerate and what of the regenerate.*

Now, when we behold duly baptized persons displaying from their very infancy every mark of unregeneracy and not a single mark of regeneracy, a circumstance the complete reverse of being uncommon; how can we reasonably believe, that they have ever been born again of the Spirit? To suppose, in defiance of all evidence, that they were regenerated while infants at baptism, but that their regeneration was almost immediately afterwards so obliterated during absolute childhood as to leave not a single trace behind; is to suppose, that God acts altogether in vain, that he stamps indeed his image on the soul, but that he suffers it to be effaced before the unhappy subject knows his right hand from his left, and that he withdraws his powerful grace ere the wretched infant has forfeited it by any deed of

* Gal. v. 19-25.

actual criminality: it is to suppose a strangely incredible circumstance, which at once puts dishonour upon God and is revolting to the intellect of man, merely to serve a turn in a theological argument.

Nor is this all. When we see baptized persons living for years without God in the world; when we afterwards observe a decided and permanent change in the conduct of such persons; and when we hear them declaring with one consent, that they are conscious of a corresponding change of heart, which makes them altogether different men from what they well remember themselves to have once been, though they may not be able to specify the precise moment when the change commenced; when the whole of this passes in review before us; can we doubt that these persons have been regenerated *after* baptism, and consequently that they were not regenerated *in* baptism?

If then we put these various matters together, we must, I think, on every principle both of Scripture and reason, decide, that all baptized infants are not regenerated. But, if all baptized infants are not regenerated, some baptized infants must have been unworthy recipients of baptism; that is to say, they must at the time of baptism have been children of wrath and therefore unworthy. To such a conclusion we are, as it appears to me, brought by the irresistible force of actual experience, against which no mere abstract argument can possibly hold good. The strong evidence of facts, reasoned upon in the very manner which Christ and St. Paul teach us to reason upon them, demonstrates, unless we are prepared to uphold a crazy system by identifying darkness with light, that many baptized infants have not been regenerated.

Why the existence of this yet palpable and undeniable circumstance should be permitted by the Supreme Being, I pretend not to determine: I can only refer it, as the last resort, with various other equally inexplicable and equally certain matters in the moral world, to the good pleasure

of an all-seeing God who orders every thing according to the dictates of his infinite wisdom. At this point, ignorant and erring man must stop short: at least, here he must stop, until he shall have satisfactorily accounted for moral evil, until he shall have reconciled divine prescience and human free-agency, and until he shall have shown why the Christian is placed in a more favourable situation than the heathen for insuring an abundant entrance into the kingdom of heaven. On these and such like points we are completely in the dark; and, the less we bewilder ourselves with vainly seeking to unravel their intricacies, the more prudently and soberly we shall act.

To return however to the matter in debate: this, at any rate, is abundantly clear, that the Church of England, speaking through her Articles, decidedly rejects the unscriptural doctrine of the necessary inseparability of baptism and regeneration.

4. Let us now proceed to the Homilies, which will probably throw additional light on the real sentiments of the Anglican Church.

(1.) In the first part of the Sermon for Rogation Week, we read as follows:

“Let them all come together that be now glorified in heaven, and let us hear what answer they will make, whether their first creation was in God’s goodness or of themselves. Forsooth, David would make answer for them all, and say, Know ye for surety, even the Lord is God; he hath made us, and not we ourselves. If they were asked again, who should be thanked for their regeneration, for their justification, and for their salvation; whether their deserts, or God’s goodness only: although in this point every one confess sufficiently the truth of this matter in his own person, yet let David answer by the mouth of them all, Not to us, O Lord, not to us, but to thy name give all the thanks, for thy loving mercy and for thy truth sake.”*

* Serm. for Rogat. Week, i. p. 402, 403. Oxon.

We are here taught, that the glorified saints in heaven are all ready to acknowledge, that they owe not their regeneration to their own merits, but solely to the goodness of God. Now, as many of these saints have doubtless been baptized during their infancy, if the church had judged that their regeneration universally took place in the article of their baptism; it were mere idle trifling with words for her gravely to assure us, that they ascribed not their regeneration to their own deserts. For, if they were regenerated at baptism during their infancy, it is indeed an abundantly clear case, that they could not rationally ascribe that privilege to their own merits: but then it is clear for so very childish a reason, that we are not doing much honour to the intellects of our Reformers by making them argue so ridiculously. Had each glorified saint, that was baptized during his infancy, been regenerated also in the article of baptism; he most indisputably could have done nothing to merit his regeneration, for a very obvious reason: he would, in fact, being a mere infant, have done nothing at all previous to his regeneration, neither good, bad, nor indifferent; so that of course he could not have merited it by any righteous deeds, which he had anteriorly performed. All this, no doubt, is quite plain; and we must certainly concede, that no person, who is regenerated at the age of a week or a month, can have previously done any thing to deserve his regeneration. But would our wise and venerable Reformers have been guilty of such egregious trifling? I should conceive not. The whole tenor of the passage manifestly implies, that at least a very great part of the glorified saints had been regenerated at an adult age and long subsequent to their baptism; but that, viewing even their most specious actions, as every Christian must view them, they ascribed not their regeneration in the slightest degree to their own antecedent meritoriousness, but solely to the undeserved goodness of God.

Understand the citation in this manner, which is evi-

dently the manner in which it ought to be understood; and we have excellent sense: but, in that case, we must give up the notion, that the Anglican Church maintains the necessary inseparability of baptism and regeneration.

(2.) But there is a yet more decisive passage in the first part of the Sermon for Whitsunday.

“Where the Holy Ghost worketh, there nothing is impossible, as may appear by the inward regeneration and sanctification of mankind. When Christ said to Nicodemus, Unless a man be born anew of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God, he was greatly amazed in his mind, and began to reason with Christ, demanding, how a man might be born which is old. Can he enter, saith he, into his mother’s womb again, and so be born anew? Behold a lively pattern of a fleshly and carnal man. He had little or no intelligence of the Holy Ghost; and therefore he goeth bluntly to work, and asketh how this thing were possible to be true; whereas otherwise, if he had known the great power of the Holy Ghost in this behalf, that it is he which inwardly worketh the regeneration and new birth of mankind; he would never have marvelled at Christ’s words, but would rather take occasion thereby to praise and glorify God. For, as there are three several and sundry persons in the Deity, so have they three several and sundry offices proper unto each of them; the Father to create, the Son to redeem, the Holy Ghost to sanctify and regenerate. Whereof the last, the more it is hid from our understanding, the more it ought to move all men to wonder at the secret and mighty working of God’s Holy Spirit which is within us. For it is the Holy Ghost, and no other thing, that doth quicken the minds of men, stirring up good and godly motions in their hearts, which are agreeable to the will and commandment of God, such as otherwise of their own crooked and perverse nature they should never have. That which is born of the Spirit, is spirit. As who should say, man of his own nature is fleshly and carnal, corrupt and naught, sin-

ful and disobedient to God, without any spark of goodness in him, without any virtuous or godly motion, only given to evil thoughts and wicked deeds. As for the works of the Spirit, the fruits of faith, charitable and godly motions, if he have any at all in him, they proceed only of the Holy Ghost, who is the only worker of our sanctification and maketh us new men in Christ Jesus;—such is the power of the Holy Ghost to regenerate men and as it were to bring them forth anew, so that they shall be nothing like the men that they were before. Neither doth he think it sufficient inwardly to work the spiritual and new birth of man, unless he do also dwell and abide in him.—Here is now that glass, wherein thou must behold thyself, and discern whether thou have the Holy Ghost within thee or the spirit of the flesh. If thou see that thy works be virtuous and good, consonant to the prescript rule of God's word, savouring and tasting not of the flesh but of the Spirit; then assure thyself, that thou art endued with the Holy Ghost; otherwise, in thinking well of thyself, thou dost nothing else but deceive thyself.”*

Let any one judge, whether the whole tenor of this passage does not plainly show, that the persons treated of in it are not infants but adults.

We are first told, that when God's Holy Spirit quickens or regenerates the minds of men, he stirs up good and godly motions in their hearts; that in consequence of this divine action in their souls, they are made new men in Christ Jesus; and that, when they are so regenerated and brought forth anew, they are nothing like the men they were before. We are next very methodically taught the manner of this great dissimilitude to their former selves. The Spirit, we learn, having inwardly wrought the new birth of man, continues also to dwell and abide in him for the purpose of sanctification. Hitherto he was fleshly and carnal, corrupt and naught, sinful and disobedient to God,

* Serm. for Whitsunday, i. pp. 389, 390, 391.

only given to evil thoughts and wicked deeds; but now, in consequence of his regeneration, a mighty change has taken place, which makes him an altogether different man from what he was previously; for his works are become virtuous and good, consonant to the rule of God's word, savouring and tasting not of the flesh, but of the Spirit. Such is the nature of the change, commencing at regeneration and afterwards fully developing itself in the course of sanctification; so that, as the man, who before wrought with greediness the deeds of the flesh, now brings forth the fruits of the Spirit; even all his neighbours (which indeed they are generally quick enough to do) may distinctly perceive the reality of it by his altered views and conduct. Lastly, with much wisdom and piety, we are warned of the fatal mistake of fancying ourselves regenerate, when our lives and dispositions prove us to be unregenerate. If these savour and taste, not of the Spirit, but of the flesh, we are but falling into a miserable self-deception in thinking well of ourselves. For, in fact, it is a palpable contradiction in terms, that a man, whose whole life demonstrates him to be carnal, should yet be spiritually regenerated and born again of God.

On the whole, I see not what sense can be made of the passage, if we think fit to refer it to infants and not to adults. An infant is indeed corrupt by nature: but how has he ever been actually disobedient to God, or how has he ever been actually given to evil thoughts and wicked deeds; which the passage represents to be the case with those unregenerate persons of whom it is treating? The change is said to consist in ceasing to work the deeds of the flesh and in beginning to bring forth the fruits of the Spirit; so that the man, by reason of this change, is perceptibly nothing like the man that he was before: but what deeds of the flesh, as enumerated by St. Paul, has an infant wrought; what fruits of the Spirit, as specified by the same apostle, has an infant manifested; how, by ceasing to work the former and by beginning to bring

forth the latter, has an infant exhibited a perfect dissimilitude to his original self? It is impossible to comprehend how phraseology like this can respect a mere child. The author of the Homily is most palpably treating of some great internal change in the soul of an adult, which altogether influences his external conduct. But, if this be the case, then the change treated of must necessarily be viewed as having taken place in this adult long after his outward baptism.

The only loop-hole, by which a disputant might attempt to escape from so obvious a conclusion, is this: the persons spoken of are heathens previous to their baptism into a Christian church; not persons within the pale of such a church, who have been duly baptized in their infancy.

To this barely possible subterfuge the close of the passage affords a complete answer. The Homilies were sermons appointed to be parochially read to the members of the Church of England. Now, at the end of a most sound and judicious account of regeneration, the reading minister addresses each of those members, who are present, individually and in the second person: "here is that glass, wherein thou must behold thyself, and discern whether thou have the Holy Ghost within thee or the spirit of the flesh." I need scarcely say, that, according to the entire foregoing account of regeneration which had just been read to the assembled members of the church, the having the the Holy Spirit, or the having the spirit of the flesh, is made the grand test of a man's being regenerate or unregenerate. Yet, at the close of it, the minister calls upon all present to examine themselves and discern, whether they have the one Spirit or the other spirit. Hence he plainly calls upon them to judge by their fruits, whether they be regenerate or unregenerate. The persons then, who are concerned in the foregoing account of regeneration, are no mere unbaptized heathens; but regularly baptized members of the Anglican Church, young and old, male and female, assembled together for the laudable purpose of

receiving ministerial instruction. These therefore are the persons, who are taught what a great change regeneration is: these are the persons called upon to discern whether they be regenerate or not. But, though it is presumed that some of these may very possibly have never been regenerated by the Holy Spirit, yet they have all been outwardly baptized with water.

Hence it is plain, that, in the judgment of the church, baptism and regeneration are by no means inseparable: and hence it is equally plain, that this same church directs all her ministers to call upon their congregations, after a godly manner, to discern whether they be individually regenerate or unregenerate.

III. Thus have I endeavoured to vindicate the Church of England from an aspersion, which has not unfrequently been cast upon her, of teaching a doctrine at once irreconcilable with right reason and contradictory to Holy Scripture. If I have at all succeeded in this attempt, my end has been answered: and I shall consider myself as having done good service to the venerable and truly apostolical communion, of which I am a member.

SERMON IV.

ROMANS ii. 28, 29.

PERTINACITY in error is so very common an infirmity of the human mind, that, although it has now been shown most fully that the doctrine of the inseparability of baptism and regeneration is not the doctrine of the Church of England, it may probably be still urged that the ablest divines of that church have ever maintained it as a genuine tenet of the communion to which they belong. Whence it may be argued, that as such is the universal opinion of her ablest divines, it seems most strangely incredible, that from age to age they should have agreed in misunderstanding the sentiments of the Anglican Church. The fair presumption, therefore, from these premises is, that they have not misunderstood her sentiments; and consequently that, notwithstanding all which has been said to the contrary, she really does teach the doctrine of the inseparability of baptism and regeneration.

I know not that I have ever seen the argument formally drawn out in this manner; but I have often seen it insinuated with as much pomp of confidence, as if it were plainly and confessedly unanswerable. Now I will readily acknowledge, that, although we might not be absolutely bound discretionally to surrender our intellects to the conclusion of such an argument, we should at least be somewhat puzzled with it; for the conclusion no doubt is very legitimately deduced from the premises; all the ablest *divines*

of the English Church have ever held the inseparability of baptism and regeneration; therefore it is incredible that the *church herself* should all the while have held a precisely opposite doctrine. But, before we perplex ourselves with this knotty conclusion, it may perhaps be as prudent to inquire, whether the premises, from which it has been deduced, are themselves valid; it may perhaps be as prudent to inquire, whether all the ablest divines of the English Church have ever held the inseparability of baptism and regeneration. If such premises can indeed be established, it will then be quite time enough to consider what we can make of the conclusion; if, on the other hand, they cannot be established, then of course we need not trouble ourselves with a conclusion deduced from a palpable falsehood. In that case, the premises being unsound, the conclusion must needs be unsound likewise.

I. Would we then know the sentiments of our standard divines, we must obviously regard, not what may have been boldly asserted of them, but what they themselves have advanced on the subject before us; that is to say, we must consult those writings which they have left for the instruction of posterity.

1. A brief confession of faith has come down to us, drawn up and signed by the following protestant bishops and martyrs while imprisoned in London; Robert Ferrar late Bishop of St. David's, Rowland Taylor, John Philpot, John Bradford, Laurence Saunders, John Hooper late Bishop of Worcester and Gloucester, Edward Crome, John Rogers, and Edmund Lawrence. It bears date the eighth day of May, in the year 1554: and to it is annexed the subsequent declaration: "To these things aforesaid, do I, Miles Coverdale late Bishop of Exeter, consent and agree with these mine afflicted brethren being prisoners. Mine own hand, Miles Coverdale." And now let us hear the solemn testimony of the eminent men whose names are here recited.

“We believe and confess concerning justification, that, as it cometh only from God’s mercy through Christ, so it is perceived and had of none who be of years of discretion, otherwise than by faith only. Which faith is not an opinion, but a certain persuasion wrought by the Holy Ghost in the mind and heart of man; wherethrough, as the mind is illuminated, so the heart is supplied to submit itself to the will of God unfeignedly, and so sheweth forth an inherent righteousness; which is to be discerned in the article of justification from the righteousness which God endueth us withal in justifying us, although inseparably they go together. And this we do, not for curiosity or contention sake, but for conscience’ sake, that it might be quiet; which it can never be, if we confound, without distinction, forgiveness of sin and Christ’s justice imputed to us, with regeneration and inherent righteousness.”

In this passage, regeneration and inherent righteousness, which is but another name for sanctification, are carefully and accurately distinguished from that imputed righteousness of Christ, by which alone we are forensically justified. Now such regeneration and sanctification are described, as consisting of an illumination of the *mind* and a suppling of the *heart* to submit itself to the will of God unfeignedly. But these internal operations necessarily imply, that the subject of them is an adult, and not a mere infant. Hence it is expressly said, that, in those who be of years of discretion, such graces are the result of a faith, which is not a mere theoretical opinion, but a certain persuasion wrought by the Holy Ghost in the mind and heart of man. The whole drift, however, of the confession clearly shows, that it treats of persons who have been born and baptized and bred in a Christian country, not of unbaptized heathens who never heard of the name of Jesus until they came to years of discretion. Consequently, it teaches us, that regeneration and sanctification, rightly described as consisting of an illumination of the mind and a suppling of the heart to submit itself unfeignedly to the will of God,

sometimes take place in the souls of those who be of years of discretion; notwithstanding these declared adults have been already baptized in their infancy.

Here then we find many venerable fathers of the Anglican Church; one of whom, Bishop Ferrar, was (according to Bishop Burnet) a member of the committee nominated to compile the Liturgy, and therefore doubtless well acquainted with the genuine doctrines of that church: here we find many venerable fathers arguing on the express supposition, which they plainly view as incontrovertible, that regeneration and its consequent sanctification may and often do take place in the souls of adults, who have been long before outwardly baptized.

Hence they speak exactly to the same purpose in what they say of the two sacraments.

“We confess and believe the sacraments of Christ, which be baptism and the Lord’s Supper, that they ought to be ministered according to the institution of Christ, concerning the substantial parts of them; and that they be no longer sacraments, than they be had in use and used to the end for which they were instituted.”

This article is chiefly levelled at the errors of the Romanists respecting the sacrament of the Lord’s Supper; but it applies with equal force to any superstitious notions respecting the sacrament of baptism, and ought clearly to be understood with reference to what had been already said on the subject of regeneration and inherent righteousness. Hence, in the judgment of these venerable men, if baptism be viewed as a sort of mechanical process by which the soul of an infant may be spiritually regenerated, it becomes no better than a mere form. At least, when we consider the general context of the first-cited passage, I know not any other sense in which we can understand them, when they speak of baptism being had in use and used to a different end from that to which it was instituted: for what other abuse can there be of baptism than to ad-

minister it with the vain notion, that the baptized subject will infallibly and *ipso facto* become regenerate?

Thus we find, even *in limine*, that three bishops and seven presbyters of the primitive English Reformed Church, one of those bishops moreover concerned in compiling the Liturgy, esteem it a matter perfectly indisputable, that regeneration may take place in adult subjects who have received infant baptism, and consequently that baptism and regeneration are not inseparable.

2. In addition to this brief confession of faith, a code of forty-one articles has come down to us: which, (according to Bishop Burnet,) it is more than probable, were framed by Cranmer and Ridley, and sent about to others that they might correct or add to them as they saw cause. The twenty-sixth article is couched in the following terms:

“There are two sacraments, which are not bare tokens of our profession, but effectual signs of God’s good-will to us: which strengthen our faith, yet not by virtue only of the work wrought, but in those who receive them worthily.”

If then any one receive baptism *unworthily*; the inward grace of regeneration, in the opinion of Cranmer and Ridley, does *not* attend it. Therefore, according to these two prelates, baptism and regeneration are not inseparable.

3. We have now heard the sentiments of five English bishops who flourished at the time of the Reformation: let us next attend to those of their venerable brother, Bishop Latimer.

“The preaching of the Gospel is the power of God to every man that doth believe. Paul means, God’s word opened is the instrument and the thing whereby ye are saved. Beware, beware, that ye diminish not this office: for, if ye do, ye decay God’s power to them that believe. Christ saith consonant to the same, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God. He must have a regeneration. And what is this regeneration? It is not to be christened in water, as those firebrands do expound it, and nothing else. How is it to be expounded,

then? St. Peter sheweth, that one place of Scripture declareth another. It is the circumstance and collation of places, that make Scripture plain. Saith St. Peter, We be born again. How? Not by a mortal seed, but by an immortal. What is this immortal seed? By the word of the living God: by the word of God preached and opened. Thus cometh in our new birth.”*

In this very explicit passage the holy martyr declares, that to confound mere baptism with spiritual regeneration, so as to maintain that every baptized person is thence *ipso facto* regenerate, is a palpable heresy, advocated by none save those whom (in the rough phraseology of the day) he calls firebrands: and, to prevent the possibility of any mistake, he afterwards asserts, that our new birth cometh in by the word of God preached and opened. Now, since it is plain that a baptized infant cannot hear the word of God preached, and since it is nevertheless declared by the bishop that the hearing of this word preached is the instrumental cause of regeneration; we must necessarily conclude, that, in his judgment, both many baptized persons were still unregenerate, and likewise that their regeneration was to be effected at an adult age by hearing the word of God faithfully preached to them.

Nor is this the whole, which we are obliged to conclude from the important passage before us. As Latimer stigmatizes all those who taught an opposite doctrine, with the uncourtly appellation of firebrands; we may be sure, that this opposite doctrine was maintained in his day only by the Romanists, and that the Protestant reformers with whom he himself symbolized, unanimously rejected it as an evident corruption of Popery. Here then we learn, in exact accordance with the authorities which have been already cited, that the general doctrine of the Church of England, at the time when her authorized documents were composed, was not the inseparability of baptism and re-

* Latimer's Serm. vol. i. p. 72.

generation, as some modern authors have very incautiously asserted, but their possible and frequent separability.

4. Another prelate, who lived during the eventful period of the reformation of the Anglican Church, is Bishop Jewel: and his sentiments, as expressed in his Apology, perfectly harmonize with those of Bishop Latimer.

“We believe, that the Holy Spirit, who is the third person of the blessed Trinity, is truly God; neither made, nor created, nor begotten, but proceeding after an ineffable manner both from the Father and the Son. It is his office to soften the hardness of the human heart; when he is received into the breasts of men, either by the wholesome preaching of the Gospel, or through any other channel. He illuminates them: and thus brings them to the knowledge of God, to the entire way of truth, to a renovation of the whole life, and to a perpetual hope of salvation.”*

The bishop is here plainly speaking of regeneration by the Holy Spirit: for what is regeneration, but the commencement of sanctification; and what is sanctification, but an enlightening of the intellect, a turning of the regenerate to the real knowledge of God, a renovation of life, and a well-grounded faith in the divine promises. Now, while he declares this great internal change to be the special work of the Holy Ghost; he expressly states, that the medium, through which that blessed agent operates upon the soul, is, either the wholesome public preaching of the Gospel; or any other more private channel, such as reading of the word, or conversation, or something analogous. But adults only are capable of being benefited in such modes as these. Therefore, in the opinion of Bishop Jewel, adults, even in a pure Christian church, may still, after infant baptism, have need to be spiritually regenerated.

5. Contemporary with the worthies, who have already passed in review before us, was Alexander Noel, Dean of

* Juell. Apolog. p. 207 in Randolph's Enchir. Theol. vol. i.

St. Paul's: and, agreeably to the inference which was drawn from a somewhat unceremonious expression of Bishop Latimer, he perfectly harmonizes with his brethren in his views of regeneration.

Having stated that baptism is the outward sign of a new birth unto righteousness, he asks, "Whence then have we regeneration itself?" The reply is, "From no other source, than from the death and resurrection of Christ. For, by the force of his death, our old man is crucified and mortified: while, through the benefit of his resurrection, we are reformed to newness of life and a holy obedience to the justice of God." He next asks, "Do *all* commonly and promiscuously attain to this grace?" The reply is, "Such fruit is received by the *faithful alone*: as for the unfaithful, by slighting the promises of God, they preclude their own admission and go away empty; yet the sacraments do not, by reason of their culpability, lose their force and nature."* Sacraments they still are, as representing an inward grace; although such grace is withheld from those, who partake of either of them unworthily.

Afterwards indeed he speaks of our being regenerated in baptism, agreeably to the phraseology used in the offices of our church; but since he had already limited the grace of regeneration to worthy recipients alone, he cannot be understood as asserting the inseparability of baptism and regeneration; because in that case, even within the space of a few pages, he would be guilty of a most absurd self-contradiction.†

* An gratiam hanc omnes communiter et promiscue consequuntur? *soli fideles* hunc fructum percipiunt; increduli vero oblatas illic a Deo promissiones respuendo; aditum sibi præcludentes, inanes abeunt; non tamen id efficiunt, ut suam sacramenta vim et naturam amittant.—Noell. Catechism. p. 215, in Randolph's Enchir. Theol. vol. ii.

† Sicuti in Baptismo semel renati sumus; ita Coenæ Dominica ad vitam spiritualem atque sempiternam jugiter alimur atque sustentemur. Ibid. p. 222. Sicuti per Baptismum semel regeneramur in Christo, et in ejus

6. Let us now descend a generation lower, and begin with inquiring into the sentiments of Bishop Hall.

“From our creation we may look to our regeneration. If we be the sons of God, we are renewed : and how shall it appear, whether we be the sons of God ? It is a golden

corpus primum quasi cooptamur et inserimur ; ita Cœnam Dominicam rite percipientes, corporis et sanguinis sui nutrimento plane divino et salutis atque immortalitatis plenissimo, Spiritus Sancti opera nobis communicato, a nobis vero fide quasi animæ nostræ ore excepto, ad æternam vitam jugiter alamur atque sustentemur ; utrobique in unum cum Christo corpus coalescentes.—Ibid. p. 226.

Independent indeed of what the Dean had said before respecting the faithful only attaining the grace of regeneration by baptism, the very context of the two passages, in which he speaks of our being born again through baptism, determines unequivocally the sense in which he uses that expression. He describes us, as being regenerated in baptism, and afterwards as being sustained in our pilgrimage heavenward by the spiritual nutriment of the Lord's Supper. Now, since he thus brings the two sacraments together into a single sentence, every rule of sound criticism requires us to suppose, that he means to treat of them homogeneously. If then he would intimate, that all baptized persons are regenerated ; he must also intimate, that all partakers of the Lord's Supper receive it worthily ; and conversely, if he would intimate, that only some receive the Lord's Supper spiritually ; he must also intimate, that only some are spiritually regenerated in baptism. But to imagine, that he maintains all partakers of the bread and wine to be spiritually nourished by the Lord's Supper, were no less contrary to common sense than to his own express declaration, *solī fideles corpore et sanguine Christi pasuntur.* (Ibid. p. 229.) Therefore, as he limits a spiritual participation of the Lord's Supper to the faithful alone ; he must be understood, as similarly limiting a spiritual participation of baptism, even at the very time when he speaks of our being born again through that ordinance. Accordingly, this interpretation, and this only, will make him consistent with himself ; for he elsewhere expressly does thus limit a spiritual participation of baptism. *Solī fideles hunc fructum (scil. gratiam regenerationis) percipiunt.*—Ibid. p. 215.

Those writers on the side of the inseparability of baptism and regeneration, who are fond of quoting Dean Noel as advocating their opinion, ought to quote him fairly ; and not garble his sentiments, by citing only his expression in *baptismo semel renati sumus*, and omitting all the rest. The Dean really advocates the directly opposite opinion.

rule, 'Whosoever are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God.' Yet if in both of these life could be counterfeited, death cannot. 'Mortify your members, which are on earth.' There is a death of this body of sin; and what manner of death? 'Those, that are Christ's, have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts.' Lo, as impossible as it is for a dead man to come down from his gibbet or up from his coffin, and to do the works of his former life; so impossible it is, that a renewed man should do the works of his unregeneration. If therefore you find your hearts unclean, your hands idle and unprofitable, your ways crooked and unholy, your corruptions alive and lively; never pretend to any renewing. You are the old men still: and, however ye may go for Christians, yet ye have denied the power of Christianity in your lives. And, if ye so continue, the fire of hell shall have so much more power over you, for that it finds the baptismal water upon your faces."*

Here, if I mistake not, Bishop Hall teaches us, that we are to judge, whether we be regenerate or no, by the fruits which we bring forth. If our fruits be those of the Spirit, we are regenerate: if of the flesh, we are not regenerate; notwithstanding we may have been duly baptized in our infancy. In that case, says the pious prelate, never pretend to any renewing: the baptismal water on your faces, so far from having made you new-born children of God, will only have rendered you more fit subjects for eternal condemnation.

In perfect accordance with such a view of the question, as he here teaches us, that a child may be baptized without having been regenerated; so he elsewhere avows his belief, that a man may be regenerated without having been baptized.

"No man that hath faith, can be condemned: for Christ dwells in our hearts by faith: and he, in whom Christ

* Bishop Hall's Works, vol. v. Serm. XX. p. 296.

dwells, cannot be a reprobate. Now it is possible, that a man may have a saving faith *before* baptism. Abraham first believed to justification: then, *after* received the sign of circumcision, as a seal of the righteousness of that faith which he had when he was uncircumcised. Therefore some, dying before their baptism, may, yea must, be saved. Neither was Abraham's case singular: he was the father of all them also, which believe, not being circumcised. These, as they are his sons in faith, so in righteousness, so in salvation. Uncircumcision cannot hinder, where faith admitteth. These, following his steps of belief before the sacrament, shall doubtless rest in his bosom *without* the sacrament; without it, as fatally absent, not as willingly neglected. 'Who takes baptism without a full faith,' saith Jerome, 'takes the water, takes not the Spirit.' Baptism, therefore, without faith, cannot save a man; and, by faith doth save him. And faith without baptism, where it cannot be had; not where it may be had, and is contemned; may save him. That Spirit, which works by means, will not be tied to means."*

The bishop in this passage does not indeed use the precise word regeneration, but he sufficiently describes the thing. Those persons, in whose hearts Christ dwells by faith, cannot, as he well remarks, be reprobate: that is to say, such persons must be regenerate; for it is a contradiction in terms to say, that Christ can dwell by faith in the hearts of the unregenerate, so that even while unregenerate they shall nevertheless have a saving faith. Now he asserts, that a man may have a saving faith, through Christ dwelling in his heart, before baptism. Consequently, he asserts in effect, that a man may be regenerated previous to his being baptized. Agreeably to this assertion, he adds, in conclusion, that baptism may exist without faith, and faith without baptism; the Spirit

* Bishop Hall's Works, vol. vii. Dec. V. Epist. 4, pp. 236, 237.

of God not being confined to the outward means. But faith is essential to the character of the regenerate: for no regenerate man can be an unbeliever. If then baptism may exist without faith; it clearly, in the judgment of Bishop Hall, may exist without regeneration.

7. As the Protestant Episcopal Church of England is now legislatively united to the Protestant Episcopal Church of Ireland, and as the two have ever been rightly esteemed sisters in the faith of Christ, I feel myself perfectly at liberty to adduce in the present question the high authority of Archbishop Usher; a worthy and eminently learned contemporary of Bishop Hall.

Speaking jointly of the two sacraments, the archbishop asks, "is God always present to give the thing signified to *all* them that the minister giveth the sign?" To this he replies, "No, not to all; for some, in receiving the signs, receive together with them their own judgment." Afterwards, descending more to particulars, he asks, "Are *all* they then, that are partakers of the outward washing of baptism, partakers also of the inward washing of the Spirit? Doth this sacrament seal up their spiritual ingrafting into Christ to all who externally receive it?" The answer is, "Surely no. Though God hath ordained these outward means for the conveyance of the inward grace to our souls; yet there is no necessity, that we should tie the working of God's Spirit to the sacraments more than to the word. The promises of salvation, Christ and all his benefits, are preached and offered to all in the ministry of the word, yet all hearers have them not conveyed to their souls by the Spirit, but those whom God hath ordained to life. So, in the sacraments, the outward elements are dispensed to all who make an outward profession of the Gospel, (for, in infants, their being born in the bosom of the Church is instead of an outward profession,) because man is not able to distinguish corn from chaff; but the inward grace of the

sacrament is not communicated to all, but to those only who are heirs of those promises whereof the sacraments are seals." He next asks, "What is the advantage then or benefit of baptism to a common Christian?" He replies, "The same as was the benefit of circumcision to the Jew outward. There is a general grace of baptism, which all the baptized partake of as of a common favour; and that is their admission into the visible body of the church, their matriculation and outward incorporating into the number of the worshippers of God by external communion. And so, as circumcision was not only a seal of the righteousness which is by faith, but, as an overplus, God appointed it to be like a wall of separation between Jew and Gentile; so is baptism a badge of an outward member of the church, a distinction from the common rout of heathen; and God thereby seals a right upon the party baptized to his ordinances, that he may use them as his privileges, and wait for an inward blessing by them. Yet this is but the porch, the shell, and outside; all, that are outwardly received into the visible church, are not spiritually ingrafted into the mystical body of Christ. Baptism always is attended upon by that *general* grace, but not always with this *special*." Again he asks, "Doth the inward grace always accompany the outward sign in those of years baptized?" To this he replies, "No; but only then, when the profession of their faith is not outward only and counterfeit, but sincere and hearty." Next he asks, "But what say you of infants baptized that are born in the church; doth the inward grace in their baptism *always* attend upon the outward sign?" The answer is, "Surely no; the sacrament of baptism is effectual in infants, only to those and to all those who belong unto the election of grace. Which thing, though we, in the judgment of charity, do judge of every particular infant; yet we have no ground to judge so of all in general; or, if we should judge so, yet it is not any judgment of cer-

tainty; we may be mistaken.”* The learned prelate finally sums up the whole question in the following passage. “When God affordeth means, we must wait upon him for a blessing in them and by them; when he doth not afford means, we must not tie the working of his grace to them. God, who sanctifieth some in the womb, knows how to sanctify all his elect infants and by his Spirit apply the merits of Christ unto them without the outward water. Some have the outward sign, and not the inward grace; some have the inward grace and not the outward sign; we must not commit idolatry by deifying the outward element.”†

So complete a statement of the matter as this requires no comment; it is sufficient to say, that, as for the Calvinistic mode in which the great Archbishop of Armagh treats the case of baptized infants, not being a Calvinist myself, I have no concern with it, neither do I see the least necessity for treating it in any such manner;‡ my sole business is to inquire into the sentiments of Usher, respecting a pretended inseparability of baptism and regeneration which some in the present day would fain impose upon us as a genuine doctrine of the English Church. Now it is abundantly manifest from the preceding citations, that this illustrious divine no more thought of advocating such a wild, superstitious fancy, than his brethren who flourished during the period of the Reformation.

8. Contemporary with Archbishop Usher and Bishop Hall, was the judicious Hooker: and him also we find holding the same views, though he has not stated them with equal precision. After maintaining that, where baptism is rightly administered, we may expect it to be

* The archbishop here plainly alludes to the phraseology of the baptismal office of the Anglican Church; and it is manifest, that he understands it precisely in the same manner as I have done.

† Usher's Body of Divin. pp. 385, 391, 392, 396.

‡ See above, Serm. iii. § ii. 3, (4,) p. 75.

attended by the inward grace of regeneration, though we are not vainly to deem the one the mechanical cause of the other; and, after acknowledging that, so far from the two being inseparably tied together, it is both known and confessed that a man may receive grace before baptism: after these preliminaries, he proceeds as follows:

“The law of Christ must be construed and understood according to rules of natural equity. And, because equity so teacheth, it is on all parts gladly confessed, that there may be in diverse cases, life by virtue of inward baptism, where outward is not found. For example, to think that a man, whose baptism the crown of martyrdom preventeth, doth lose in that case the happiness which so many thousands enjoy that have only had the grace to believe, and not the honour to seal the testimony thereof with death, were almost barbarous. Again, when some certain opinionative men in St. Bernard’s time began privately to hold, that, because our Lord had said, ‘Unless a man be born again of water,’ therefore life, without either actual baptism or martyrdom instead of baptism, cannot possibly be obtained at the hands of God: Bernard, considering that the same equity which had moved them to think the necessity of baptism no bar against the happy estate of unbaptized martyrs, is as forcible for the warrant of their salvation, in whom, although there be not the sufferings of holy martyrs, there are the virtues which sanctified those sufferings and made them precious in God’s sight; professed himself an enemy to that severity and strictness, which admitteth no exception but of martyrs only. Touching infants which die unbaptized, sith they neither have this sacrament itself nor any sense or conceit thereof, the judgment of many hath gone hard against them. But yet, *seeing grace is not absolutely tied unto sacraments*, remorse of equity hath moved diverse of the school-divines to grant, that God, all-merciful to such as are not in themselves able to desire baptism, imputeth the secret desire that others have in their behalf, and accepteth the same

as theirs rather than casteth away their souls for that which no man is able to help. We are plainly taught of God, that the seed of faithful parentage is holy from the very birth. Which, albeit we may not so understand, as if the children of believing parents were without sin: yet it is not to be thought, that he, which, as it were from heaven, hath nominated and designated them unto holiness by special privilege of their very birth, will himself deprive them of regeneration and inward grace, only because necessity depriveth them of outward sacraments.”*

In this passage Hooker maintains, that inward baptism or regeneration may subsist where outward baptism is not found, that grace is not absolutely tied unto sacraments, and consequently that infants may partake of regeneration and inward grace though the outward sacrament has never been administered to them. Nor was such an opinion in his day at all singular or unusual: he tells us, as a thing quite familiar and well known, that “*it is on all parts gladly confessed* that there may be in diverse cases *life*” (that is, spiritual life, of which regeneration is the commencement) “by virtue of inward baptism, when outward baptism is not found.” The doctrine then, that regeneration is *not* inseparably tied to baptism, but that it may take place in the human soul either *before*, or *at*, or *after* baptism, so far from being a fond and novel speculation in Hooker’s time, was, we see, *on all parts gladly confessed*.

9. Let us now descend a step yet lower, and inquire what the divines of the English and Irish Churches say in the next generation. Bishop Reynolds shall first declare his sentiments.

“Unregenerate men are often secure men, making principles and premises of their own to build the conclusions of their salvation upon.”†

Now, as these unregenerate men *argue and draw conclu-*

* Hooker’s Eccles. Pol. b. v. § 60.

† Bishop Reynolds’s Works, p. 46.

sions, they must plainly be adults. But the context manifestly shows, that they are outwardly at least members of the Christian church; because they are described as speculating upon that salvation, which God has offered to all men through the merits of his Son. Therefore, in the judgment of Bishop Reynolds, baptized adults may still be unregenerate.

“The unregenerate are of several sorts and stamps. Some are apparently and *in conspectu hominum* outrageous sinners; upon whom every man, that sees them, may without breach of charity pass this sentence, There goes a man who declares himself in the eyes of the world to be a servant of sin. Others there are of a more calm, civil, composed course, men much wiser, but not a dram holier than those before. In those men there appeareth not so sovereign and absolute a dominion of sin as hath been spoken of, inasmuch as they seem to live in a fair external conformity to the truths which they have learned. These more moderate sort of unregenerate men seem to shift off from themselves the charge of being subject to the reign of sin, inasmuch as they abhor many sins, and do many things which the rule requires.”*

Here again the unregenerate men, of whom the bishop is treating, are certainly adults: and they are no less certainly outward members of the Christian church; because they are described as living in some measure conformably to the truths which they have learned, and as doing many things which the rule of God’s word requires at their hands. The men, therefore, have been baptized; yet the bishop scruples not to pronounce them unregenerate, notwithstanding their outward baptism.

“Unregenerate men of a more calm and civil temper may conceive themselves delivered from the reign of sin, because they have many conflicts with it and reluctancies

* Bishop Reynolds’s Works, pp. 111, 113.

against it; and so afford not such a plenary and resolved obedience to it, as so absolute a power requireth.”*

In this passage likewise the unregenerate men are evidently baptized adults; because they are exhibited, as being outwardly in a Christian church, and as avowedly receiving the word of God for their rule of duty. Yet, baptized as they are, they are nevertheless styled unregenerate.

10. It were easy to multiply citations of a similar purport from the works of Bishop Reynolds, for he invariably takes it for granted and considers it as a point which no person would think of denying, that many baptized persons are still unregenerate: but, as I wish to avoid prolixity, I will pass forward to Bishop Hopkins.

This prelate is the author of four very valuable sermons on the express subject of regeneration; and, throughout the whole of them, he uniformly argues on the ground, that the outward visible sign in baptism is *frequently* unattended by the inward spiritual grace. Let us, however, in some detached passages, hear him speak in his own words.

“Very difficult it is to persuade men against the prejudices of their corrupt hearts. This great change, say they, is more than needs. Regeneration begins now to be decried by as great masters in Israel as ever Nicodemus was. Many understand not to what end the fabric of corrupt nature should be demolished, and men as it were turned out of themselves. They think, if they are but baptized, whereby, as they suppose, the guilt of original sin is washed away, that a sober religious life, keeping from gross actual sins, is sufficient for the obtaining of heaven, without those hard and inexplicable notions of regeneration. I shall therefore endeavour to convince you of the indispensable necessity that there is of being born again; that so, when you are persuaded of it, you

* Bishop Reynolds's Works, p. 118.

may give no rest unto yourselves nor unto God, till he cause his Spirit, which is that wind that bloweth where it listeth, to breathe spiritual life into you, without which it is impossible that you should inherit eternal life.”*

The bishop here exhorts his congregation, which doubtless contained many baptized adults, to beseech God that he would regenerate them by his Holy Spirit. Hence he certainly believed, that several of his hearers might very possibly *want* the grace of spiritual regeneration, though they had duly been baptized with water in their infancy. We may additionally gather from this passage, that the old Popish superstition of the inseparability of baptism and regeneration was then beginning (as the bishop speaks) to rear its head and even to be fostered by some of the clergy themselves. From the time of the Reformation, it had been, in a manner, unknown among Protestants: but now the genuine doctrine of the reformed began to be decried by as great masters in Israel as ever Nicodemus was. The Bishop of Derry, however, manfully bore his testimony against the revival of such an unscriptural corruption; and that testimony has come down to us, couched in terms which can neither be misunderstood nor explained away.

“By water is meant baptism, the element being put for the ordinance, which is the sacrament of our regeneration: and thus you have it in Ephesians v. 26, where the church is said to be sanctified and cleansed through the washing of water. There is indeed a baptismal regeneration, whereby all that are made partakers of that ordinance are, according to Scripture language, sanctified, renewed, made the children of God, and brought within the bond of the covenant: but all this is but after an external manner, as being in this ordinance entered members of the visible church. Now this external regeneration by water entitles none to eternal life, but as the Spirit moves upon the

* Bishop Hopkins's Works, p. 535.

face of these waters, and doth sometimes secretly convey quickening virtue through them.”*

Here the bishop asserts, what no person will be disposed to deny, that regeneration does *sometimes* accompany baptism: but his very use of the word *sometimes*, implies, if indeed it were any way necessary to gather his sentiments by mere implication, that such is very far from being *always* the case. Afterwards he teaches, in exact conformity with the authorities already cited, that the instrument in God's hand, whereby the soul is ordinarily regenerated, is the inspired word of Holy Scripture. Hence it plainly follows, that, so far from bolstering up our hearers in the vain notion that they are already regenerated simply because they have been baptized; we ought rather to urge upon their consciences, with much sincerity of speech, the powerful word of God, that they who have not yet been regenerated may by his blessing be really born again of his Spirit as they have heretofore been typically born again of water.

“The seminal virtue or means, by which this new birth is effected, is the word of God. So you have it expressly in James i. 18. ‘Of his own will begat he us with the word of truth.’ The preaching of the word is the great means, which God hath appointed for regeneration in Romans x. 17: ‘Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.’ When God first created man, it is said that he breathed into his nostrils the breath of life. But, when God new creates man, he breathes into his ears. This is that word, that raiseth the dead, calleth them out of the grave, opens the eyes of the blind, turns the hearts of the disobedient and rebellious. Such an energy is there in the word of God, when the Spirit of God clothes it with power, that it breaks in upon the conscience, ruins and demolishes the frame of sinful

* Bishop Hopkins's Works, p. 519.

nature, and in an instant conveys spiritual light and warmth and quickening into the soul.”*

11. After Bishop Hopkins, we may profitably attend to Bishop Pearson, who still speaks to the same effect.

“The second part of the office of the Holy Ghost in the sanctification of man, is the regeneration and renovation of him. For, our natural corruption consisting in an aversion of our wills and a depravation of our affections, an inclination of them to the will of God is wrought within us by the Spirit of God. ‘For according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Ghost.’ So that, ‘except a man be born again of water and of the Holy Ghost, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.’ We are all at first defiled by the corruption of our nature and the pollution of our sins: ‘but we are washed, but we are sanctified, but we are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus and by the Spirit of our God.’ The second part then of the office of the Holy Ghost is the renewing of man in all the parts and faculties of his soul:” as the first was “an internal illumination, by which we are inclined to the obedience of faith, in assenting to those truths which, unto a natural and carnal man, are foolishness—What the apostle then wished to the Corinthians ought to be the earnest petition of every Christian, that ‘the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the communion of the Holy Ghost, be with us all.’ For, ‘if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his:’ if he have not that which maketh the union, he cannot be united; if he acknowledge him not to be his Lord, he cannot be his servant: and ‘no man can say that Jesus is the Lord, but by the Holy Ghost.’ ‘That, which is born of the Spirit, is Spirit;’ such is their felicity that have it: ‘that which is born of the flesh, is flesh;’ such is their infelicity that want it.”†

* Bishop Hopkins’s Works, p. 533.

† Bishop Pearson on the Creed, art. viii. vol. i. pp. 496, 500: Oxon.

It is supposed, we here see, by Bishop Pearson, that the first work of the Holy Ghost in the sanctification of man is the internal illumination of his intellect; by which he is inclined to the obedience of faith, in assenting to those truths which to a natural and carnal man are foolishness; and that the second work of the same blessed Spirit in man's sanctification is the regeneration and renovation of him. I think it more logically accurate to say, that regeneration is the commencing point of sanctification; and that the enlightening of the intellect, the influencing of the will, and the purifying of the affections, begin with, or follow in regular order after, regeneration; for, as the natural birth is the inchoation of the natural life, so the spiritual birth must analogously be the inchoation of the spiritual life. This, however, is of no importance so far as the sentiments of the bishop are concerned respecting the pretended inseparability of baptism and regeneration. The enlightening of the intellect, by which a man is inclined to the obedience of faith and is made to assent to the truths of the Gospel, is clearly an operation, which in the very nature of things can only take place in an adult. But this operation, according to the bishop, precedes regeneration. Therefore he necessarily considers regeneration also, as taking place in an adult. Now the adults, whom he thus supposes to be regenerated subsequent to the illumination of their intellect, are undoubtedly, not unbaptized pagans, but baptized members of the Christian church; for he speaks of them plurally in the first person:—"an internal illumination, by which *we* are inclined to the obedience of faith." Hence it is manifest, that the bishop considers it as a matter perfectly indisputable that adults might be inwardly regenerated long after they had been outwardly baptized during their infancy. Accordingly, the whole of his subsequent discourse hinges upon this very point. "If any man," a case quite possible even in a visible Christian church,

according to the opinion of Bishop Pearson: "If any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his; if he have not that which maketh the union, he cannot be united."

12. Let us next hear Bishop Wilkins on the same subject.

This prelate advises us to pray earnestly to God, "that he would give unto us a new heart, and put a new spirit within us; that thus we may be regenerate and become new creatures, being born again of that incorruptible seed the word of God."*

The persons, to whom such advice is given, are baptized Christians. Now, if the bishop had held the strange notion that all who are baptized are thence *ipso facto* regenerated, it is a clear case, that he never would have exhorted baptized Christians to pray that they might be regenerated. Hence it is evident, that, in his judgment, many may have been baptized, who yet need the inward regeneration of the Holy Spirit. We may note, that, in exact accordance with the preceding authorities, he maintains the word of God to be the instrumental cause of regeneration. He teaches, therefore, that spiritual regeneration in baptized adults is effected by the faithful preaching of God's word; for it is superfluous to observe, that no infant can possibly be regenerated through the medium of hearing the Scriptures read or expounded.

13. A slight descent in the chronological scale will bring us to another class of eminent English divines; but still we find the same important truth sedulously inculcated, and the same dangerous superstition carefully discountenanced. Bishop Burnet is remarkably strong and decisive upon the question; so that we cannot do better than let him be the first spokesman.

"Baptism makes us the visible members of that one body, into which we are baptized or admitted by baptism;

* Bishop Wilkins on Prayer, c. xvii.

but that, which saves us in it, which both deadens and quickens us, must be a thing of another nature—This is not to be believed to be of the nature of a charm, as if the very act of baptism carried always with it an inward regeneration. Here we must confess, that very early some doctrines arose upon baptism that we cannot be determined by.” One of these was “the mixing of the outward and the inward effects of baptism; it being believed, that every person that was born of the water was also born of the Spirit, and that the renewing of the Holy Ghost did always accompany the washing of regeneration.* And this obliged St. Austin to make that difference between the regenerate and the predestinated; for he thought, that all who were baptized were also regenerated—But baptism is a federal admission into Christianity; in which, on God’s part, all the blessings of the Gospel are made over to the baptized; and, on the other hand, the person baptized takes on him, by a solemn profession and vow, to observe and adhere to the whole Christian religion. So that it is a very natural distinction to say, that the outward effects of baptism follow it as outwardly performed, but that the inward effects of it follow upon the inward acts. But this difference is still to be observed between inward acts and outward actions, that, when the outward action is rightly performed, the church must reckon the baptism good and never renew it; but, if one has been wanting in the

* I have already noticed the gross immoral tendency of this superstition, as it displayed itself in the third and fourth centuries. Men systematically refused to be baptized, in order that they might freely live in sin; for, baptism and regeneration being, in the fashionable theology of the day, esteemed inseparable, all that they had to do to make sure of heaven was to be baptized in the article of death.

Whatever may be thought of the premises, no one can deny that the conclusion from such premises was strictly logical. The reasoning was accurate enough; but, unfortunately, the basis was assumed as truth, instead of being demonstrated to be so.

inward acts, these may be afterwards renewed and that want may be made up by repentance.”*

Nothing can be more explicit than the truly orthodox passage, which I have just cited. The bishop begins with stating, that we are not superstitiously to fancy that the very act of baptism, like some magical charm, carries always with it an inward regeneration; though he acknowledges, that the corruption crept very early into the Christian church. “We, however,” says he, “of the Anglican Church, cannot be determined by any such abuse of sound doctrine. Our sentiments are widely different. If the inward grace of regeneration has been *wanting* to the outward act of baptism, that want must afterwards be made up.”

14. To the same effect also speaks Dr. Isaac Barrow:

“We are naturally void of those good dispositions in understanding, will, and affections; which are needful to render us acceptable unto God, fit to serve and please him, capable of any favour from him and of any true happiness in ourselves. To remove which bad dispositions, and to beget those contrary to them, God in mercy doth grant to us the virtue of his Holy Spirit; who, first opening our hearts, begetteth divine knowledge, wisdom, and faith, in our minds, which is the work of illumination and instruction. Then by continual impressions he bendeth our inclinations, and mollifieth our hearts, and tempereth our affections to a willing compliance with God’s will and a

* Bishop Burnet on the Articles, Art. xxvii. pp. 382, 383, 384. Oxon. I cannot refrain from taking this opportunity of noticing, in terms of deserved commendation, the service which the University of Oxford has rendered to sound Christianity, by reprinting beautiful and convenient editions of our standard earlier divines. Thus, as far as in them lies, the leading members of that great seminary have laudably stepped forward to oppose the groundless notion that baptism and regeneration are inseparable; for those divines, thus prominently brought forward to the public notice under academical sanction, are unanimous, we see, in protesting against the unscriptural dogma now under discussion.

heartly complacence in that which is good and pleasing to God: which is the work of sanctification, another great part of his office. Both these operations together (enlightening our minds, and sanctifying our wills and affections) do constitute and accomplish that work, which is styled the regeneration, renovation, vivification, new creation, resurrection, of a man: the faculties of our souls being so improved, that we become, as it were, other men thereby; able and apt to do that, for which before we were altogether indisposed and unfit.”*

It is perfectly evident, that Dr. Barrow is here speaking, not of pagans, who never heard the sound of the Gospel, nor yet of infants, who, from the circumstance of their infancy, are necessarily incapable of knowledge and wisdom and faith and a hearty complacence in that which is good and pleasing to God; but of baptized adults in a Christian church, for to them, and to them only is such language applicable. Now he tells us, that the enlightening the minds of these adults, so that they shall henceforth possess divine knowledge and wisdom and faith; and the sanctifying their wills and affections, so that henceforth they shall cheerfully comply with God’s will and feel a hearty complacence in that which is good and pleasing to him: he tells us, that these two operations, which inevitably presuppose the subject of them to be an adult, do constitute and accomplish that work which is styled the regeneration of a man. But this he plainly could not have told us, unless he had held, that a baptized adult, notwithstanding his baptism, might yet have never received the inward grace of spiritual regeneration: for, if he had believed that every baptized person was thence *ipso facto* regenerate, the whole tenor of his discourse were, to all intents and purposes, nugatory and impertinent. We may conclude, therefore, that Dr. Barrow, like the other eminent divines who have been already adduced, held the sound

* Barrow’s Works, vol. ii. p. 504.

doctrine, that baptism may be outwardly administered without having for its necessary concomitant the inward grace of regeneration.

15. Yet more strong and decisive on the point is Archbishop Tillotson, whose opinion may here be cited with peculiar advantage, because he is so generally esteemed the very standard of Anglican orthodoxy.

Speaking of the final prevalence of grace over nature in those adults who are really sanctified by the blessed Spirit; an operation, which with much justice he had previously stated to be immediately connected with regeneration, the two being equally ascribed in Holy Writ to the Spirit of God and to the word of God: speaking of the final prevalence of grace over nature in all truly sanctified adults, the archbishop proceeds: "After many strugglings and conflicts with their lusts and the strong bias of evil habits, this resolution, assisted by the grace of God, does effectually prevail and make a real change both in the temper of their minds and the course of their lives: and, *when that is done, and not before, they are said to be regenerate.*"*

Here we see, that the archbishop, like his venerable predecessors in the church, ascribes regeneration and its consequent sanctification to a spiritual hearing of God's word, which of course none but an adult can do; for it is physically impossible, that a child of a month old should derive any benefit from hearing God's word. And, agreeably to this very accurate view of the subject, he afterwards describes an internal conflict and victory, the lusts and evil habits of the flesh striving against that better resolution which is injected into the soul by the Divine Spirit: a conflict, therefore, which can only be experienced, and a victory which can only be gained, by an adult. Having thus stated the matter, he concludes with pronouncing, that men are said to be regenerate, when a real change has taken place both in the temper of their minds and in

* Archbishop Tillotson's Sermon on Gal. vi. 15.

the course of their lives: and, as if to cut off all occasion of cavil on the part of the unorthodox, he adds, that we are only to deem men regenerate, when this change has actually taken place, and not before, though they may have been regularly baptized with water in their infancy.

16. Descending a step nearer to our own times, let us next attend to the language used by that close and proverbially acute reasoner, Bishop Butler.

“If mankind are corrupted and depraved in their moral character and so are unfit for that state which Christ is gone to prepare for his disciples, and if the assistance of God’s Spirit be necessary to renew their nature in the degree requisite to their being qualified for that state; all which is implied in the express though figurative declaration, ‘Except a man be born of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God:’ supposing this, is it possible that any serious person can think it a slight matter, whether or no he makes use of the means, expressly commanded by God, for obtaining this divine assistance? Especially since the whole analogy of nature shows, that we are not to expect any benefits without making use of the appointed means for obtaining or enjoying them.”*

Such language as this could obviously have never been used by one, who held the notion that all baptized infants are, by the very circumstance of their baptism, spiritually regenerate. So far from Bishop Butler being an advocate for this groundless fancy, his whole argument necessarily supposes that the very opposite doctrine is to be received as an undoubted truth.

He begins with stating, that depraved man is naturally unfit for heaven. Next he intimates, that, in order to his being qualified for the presence of God, his nature must be renewed by the Holy Spirit. Then he informs us, that the whole of this is implied and set forth in our Lord’s figurative declaration, “Except a man be born of the Spirit,

* Bishop Butler’s Anal. part ii. c. 1.

he cannot enter into the kingdom of God." Having thus opened the doctrine in a manner quite agreeable to Scripture, he very solemnly and emphatically asks, how any serious and thinking person can deem it a slight matter, whether or no he (namely, the serious person) makes use of the means, expressly appointed by God, for obtaining this divine assistance in order to his being born again? Now the serious person, who is to make use of means that he may be spiritually regenerated and so become qualified for the kingdom of heaven, is plainly no infant in his nurse's arms: for how can an infant think at all upon the subject, whether a neglect of the means be or be not a slight matter; which yet the serious person is exhorted to do. The serious or thinking person, therefore, who has need of spiritual regeneration, and who accordingly is advised to seek the divine assistance in order to it, is manifestly an adult. But the whole tenor of the argument shows, that he is not a pagan adult, who is altogether ignorant of God's revealed will, but a baptized adult in a Christian church, who fully acknowledges the authority of Scripture, and who is thence addressed as one who does fully acknowledge it. Therefore, in the judgment of Bishop Butler, a baptized adult might still want spiritual regeneration, and might therefore be properly exhorted to use the appointed means for obtaining it. These means, expressly commanded by God, are the diligent hearing of his holy word; as most of the divines, whose opinions have passed in review before us, very soundly maintain: agreeably to that of St. Peter, "Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God which liveth and abideth for ever."*

17. Nor is the genuine doctrine of the Anglican Church respecting the matter of regeneration without its advocates even in the present day, though some individuals may have unhappily turned aside from the faith once delivered

* 1 Peter i. 23.

to the saints. Out of these, it will be amply sufficient to my purpose, if I select two, whose names are deservedly held in reverence by every orthodox and soberminded churchman.

The sentiments of Bishop Horsley are conveyed in the following sufficiently explicit passage.

“That image of God, in which Adam was created, in our Lord appeared perfect and entire; in the unspotted innocence of his life, the sanctity of his manners, and his perfect obedience to the law of God: in the vast powers of his mind, intellectual and moral; intellectual, in his comprehension of all knowledge; moral, in his power of resisting all the allurements of vice and of encountering all the difficulties of virtue and religion—In him, the beauty of the divine image was refulgent in its original perfection: in all the sons of Adam, it is obscured and marred in a degree to be scarce perceptible; the will depraved, the imagination debauched, the reason weak, the passions rampant! This deformity is not externally visible, nor the spiritual beauty which is its opposite: but, could the eye be turned upon the internal man, we should see the hideous shape of a will at enmity with God, a heart disregarding his law, insensible of his goodness, fearless of his wrath, swelling with the passions of ambition, avarice, vain-glory, lust. Yet this is the picture of the *unregenerated* man by the depravity consequent upon the fall, born in iniquity and conceived in sin.”*

Would we know the sentiments of this truly orthodox and learned prelate on the subject of baptism, we have simply to ascertain what sort of person he is describing to us in his accurate and highly-wrought picture of the unregenerated man.

The person then whose mental lineaments he exhibits, is clearly not an infant; because certain operations of the soul are attributed to him, which cannot be predicated of

* Bishop Horsley's Sermons, vol. i. serm. v. pp. 94, 95.

a mere child as yet unconscious how "to refuse the evil and choose the good."* A babe at the breast cannot be said to disregard God's law, to be insensible of his goodness, to be fearless of his wrath, and to swell with the passions of ambition, avarice, vain-glory, lust. Such language, on the very face of it, is solely applicable to an adult. Therefore the unregenerated man, whom the bishop describes, is certainly an adult, and not an infant.

He is not however an adult only, as contradistinguished from an infant: he is likewise a baptized adult in a Christian church, as contradistinguished from an unbaptized adult in a heathen community. The bishop, at the commencement of the description, rightly states in general terms, that the divine image is obscured and marred in all the sons of Adam: but, as he had to deal with a congregation, every member of which professed his belief in the Gospel, he turns immediately to what would be much more edifying to such a congregation; namely the condition of some, who had been baptized, and who were nevertheless still in the very bondage of iniquity. The unregenerated man whom he would specifically hold up to the serious attention of all his hearers, is a person, who disregards the law of God, and whose heart swells with the passions of ambition and avarice and lust and vain-glory. This unregenerated man therefore knows the revealed law of God; for we cannot be said to disregard that, of which we are wholly ignorant: he knows it however only to refuse obedience to its precepts; for his heart, being as yet unchanged by grace, swells with every evil and fiendlike passion. Hence it is clear, that the bishop is describing a man, who has been duly baptized, and who from his youth, by reason of a Christian education, has speculatively known the revealed law of God: a man, nevertheless, who knows that law only to disregard it, and who (like too many nominal believers) bears within him

* Isaiah vii. 16.

a heart perfectly unreclaimed and altogether disobedient. Therefore the unregenerated man, whom the bishop describes, is no ignorant pagan adult, but a baptized adult in a Christian church.

Hence it is evident, that, in the opinion of Bishop Horsley, a *baptized* adult, living outwardly in the pale of a Christian church, and knowing though disregarding the law of God, might be appropriately designated by the title of an *unregenerated man*.

18. Exactly similar is the doctrine of the venerable and excellent Bishop Barrington, as authoritatively delivered to his clergy from the chair which he has long so worthily filled.

“It cannot be from any defect of external evidence, that our modern philosophers deny or doubt the truth of Christianity. No: it is an unconsciousness of their want of a Redeemer that obstructs the light of the Gospel; it is the vanity of a disputatious temper; the hardness of an unhumbed heart; the opposing interests of a worldly spirit. In short, it is the repugnance and delusion of an *unregenerated* mind, that blinds them against the plainest and most obvious conclusions.”*

The modern philosophers, to whom the bishop here alludes, are Voltaire, Gibbon, Hume, and others of a similar stamp; as appears from his immediately afterwards specially adducing the notorious Thomas Paine as an example. Now all these men had been baptized in their infancy, and during their youth had been brought up in outward conformity to a Christian church; therefore, according to the extraordinary theory which inseparably ties regeneration to baptism, they were all spiritually regenerate, notwithstanding their avowed and open infidelity. The pious Bishop of Durham, however, both with much sound sense and much scriptural knowledge,

* Charge to the Clergy of Durham in 1797, in Sermons, Charges, and Tracts, pp. 211, 212.

scruples not to ascribe their unbelief to the repugnance and delusion of an unregenerated mind. Thus he gives it as his decided opinion, an opinion in which all the eminent divines already cited would heartily agree with him, that the baptized philosophers, of whom he is speaking, showed plainly by their deeds, that, notwithstanding their baptism, they had never received the grace of spiritual regeneration.

“There is in our corrupt and unreformed nature an indolence, a sloth, a reluctance to the constant and regular performance even of the ordinary duties of religion; which, to many, renders prayer a burden, and the public service of God a wearisome constraint instead of perfect freedom—To the regenerate Christian, to the new man created in Christ Jesus to good works, created after God in righteousness and true holiness, the yoke of Christ is certainly easy, and his burden light; but to the corrupt passions of mere animal nature, to the selfish inclinations of the old man, nothing can be more irksome and painful.”*

In this passage the bishop describes, with much accurate knowledge of the human heart, two different classes of men, which equally though with very dissimilar feelings attend the public worship of the church, which equally therefore consist of professed and baptized Christians. The first of these classes he represents, as being yet in a state of corrupt and unreformed nature, and as experiencing all the selfish inclinations of the old man; the second of them he exhibits, as comprehending no one save the regenerate Christian or the “new man created in Christ Jesus to good works.” Nothing can be more agreeable either to Scripture or to actual matter of fact, than such an arrangement; but then the conclusion from it is abundantly obvious. Though the bishop is speaking

* Charge to the Clergy of Durham in 1801, in Sermons, Charges, and Tracts, pp. 297, 298.

of none but baptized persons, he most soundly pronounces, that some only of these baptized persons are regenerate Christians and new men, while others of them still remain in the unreformed or unregenerated nature of the old man.

“Lest, however, the great and precious promises of God should be wrested to sinister purposes, your hearers should be seduously taught, that without sanctification there can be for them no atonement; for them Christ will have died in vain; they will be, on the authority of St. Paul, still in their sins, that is, obnoxious to the curse and punishment of sin. It is true indeed, that, whom God is willing to justify, he sanctifies; and he sanctifies whom he will; ‘for he hath mercy, on whom he will have mercy; and, whom he will, he hardeneth;’ that is, he leaves the sinner to the natural corruption of his own heart and the unsubdued power of sin. The sinner, who is thus left, continues in an *unregenerate* and unsanctified, that is, in a reprobate and lost state.”*

As the bishop is here instructing his clergy how they ought to teach their hearers, those hearers are of course baptized persons within the pale of the English Church. Yet he supposes it to be very probable, that, in the course of their ministry, they may have to deal with persons, who, notwithstanding their baptism, being left by the sovereign will of God to the natural corruption of their own hearts, continue in an unregenerate and unsanctified condition.

“From the Scriptures we must collect, what human nature was at first, and what it soon became. From the world at present and from our own hearts we must learn, what it is now. A serious and impartial study of human nature, as exhibited in the Scriptures, the world, and ourselves, will lead to the same unavoidable conviction, and

* Charge to the Clergy of Durham in 1801, in Sermons, Charges, and Tracts, p. 310.

show what our nature became, when left to itself, when turned from God to the world, from light to darkness, from holy obedience to earthly and sensual appetites. Upon this foundation may be built those humiliating considerations, which are most in consonance with the end of our Saviour's incarnation: and in this view it will not be difficult to convince an unhardened mind, that the heart of the disobedient can never be turned to the wisdom of the just and restored to the image of the divine goodness in which it was created, but by repentance towards God and faith towards our Lord Jesus Christ. In a state of sincere repentance and true faith the mind has acquired that newness of spirit and rectitude of heart, which constitutes the new birth, and is the source of every spiritual comfort here and all our hopes hereafter.*

This passage is so explicit, that it scarcely requires any comment. The bishop enforces it upon his clergy to teach their people, that the heart of the disobedient can only be turned to the wisdom of the just and restored to the image of the divine goodness, in other words, can only be regenerated, by repentance towards God and faith towards Christ: and he then adds, that it is in this state of sincere repentance and true faith that the mind acquires that newness of spirit and rectitude of heart which constitutes the new birth or regeneration. Such language is solely applicable to adults. Consequently, this sound and orthodox prelate rightly informs us, that, however a man may have been baptized in his infancy, he cannot be deemed regenerate, until by repentance and faith his mind shall have acquired that newness of spirit and rectitude of heart which constitutes the new birth. Unless he can produce this evidence of spiritual regeneration, he is as yet dead in trespasses and sins, notwithstanding his admission by the water of baptism into the visible church of Christ.

* Charge to the Clergy of Durham in 1801, in Sermons, Charges, and Tracts, pp. 311, 312.

Such in all ages has ever been the language of the best Reformed English divines: and happy is the lot of the clergy, who receive from their spiritual superior such instructions as to the proper mode of feeding their respective flocks!

II. It were easy to adduce many others, who still, with strict uniformity, maintain the same truly scriptural doctrine: but it may amply suffice to have brought forward eighteen prelates and ten distinguished presbyters of the Church of England and Ireland, in regular succession from the time of the Reformation down even to the present day.

As Protestants, indeed, we claim to call no man master save Christ alone; nor do we hold ourselves bound by the authority of these eminent divines one jot further, than as the opinion which they advocate may be “proved by most certain warrant of Holy Writ.” They have not therefore been alleged, in order to establish a doctrine; but in order to show, that, as a particular doctrine is the *undoubted* doctrine of the Church of England, so that particular doctrine has been consistently *enforced in every age* since the Reformation by the best and most orthodox divines of that church.

This task has now been performed at considerable length: and it is to be hoped, that in future we may no longer be encountered by the hardy, though ignorantly rash assertions, that the Church of England and all her soundest divines in every age concur in teaching the necessary inseparability of baptism and regeneration, and that the regeneration by God’s blessed Spirit of those who have been already baptized, is a mere novel doctrine by which in the present day the weakness of palpable credulity can alone be imposed upon.

An overweening confidence is no sure proof of strength: and the vain affectation of superiority, evinced by such language, is rendered doubly indecorous by the unfortunate circumstance of its direct contrariety to matter of fact.

The doctrine of Scripture, of the English Church, and of the best divines of that church in every age since the Reformation, is, that *baptism and regeneration are NOT inseparable*: and, as for the charge of a weak credulity which has been so incautiously made against those who advocate this sound and orthodox tenet, it may, I apprehend, be retorted (if need were) with twofold energy against persons, who can believe, against even the very evidence of *actual matter of fact*, that an outward symbolical sprinkling of water *invariably* produces a complete inward change of the human soul in all its operations and affections. He, who, without a shadow of proof from either Scripture or reason, can believe so marvellous an alleged fact as this, stands prepared to admit, as an undoubted verity, transubstantiation or any other monstrous figment, provided only it be imposed upon him in a high tone of authoritative confidence. But he, who beholds a neighbour turned from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God; who perceives, by the decisive evidence of perfectly altered affections and an entirely changed course of life, that this neighbour is altogether a different man from what he heretofore was; and who reads in his Bible that precisely such a change is styled regeneration, and that it is absolutely necessary for admission into the kingdom of heaven: he, who sees all this with his own eyes, and who thence believes that his neighbour has been born again by the word of God, acts, so far as I can judge, only according to the dictates of right reason: for he believes, not because he is credulous, but because he cannot *avoid* believing; not because he wishes to impose upon himself, but because *facts* irresistibly compel him to believe. In reality, he is by no means the only person who discovers the change in question. The world is quick-sighted enough in this particular: and it ordinarily evinces its dislike to the alteration, by greeting the subject of it with sundry compellations sufficiently expressive of its disapproval. Thus it is manifest, that, in the one case, belief rests upon *facts*: while,

in the other case, it not only does *not* rest upon facts, but is taken up in direct *contradiction* to them. To whom, therefore, the charge of a blind credulity most justly applies, let any sober-minded and reasonable inquirer determine.

Mere charges, however, on either side, prove just nothing at all, so far as the real merits of the question are concerned.

These must intrinsically be determined by Reason, Experience, and Scripture; which, last indeed in enumeration though first in direct authority, can never contradict the other two. Thus, and thus only, must the merits of the question be intrinsically determined.

But, when we are gravely assured, that the doctrine, here contended for, is a novel doctrine, *quite unknown* to the Church of England and all her best divines; and when we are further told with much confidence, that, in the judgment of that church, it is a dreadfully unorthodox, not to say an heretical doctrine: we have then to take a different ground; and, by patiently inquiring what the English Church and its standard divines really do say on the subject, we have next to determine the merits of the question extrinsically.

Both these investigations have now been painfully completed: and, unless some very strong evidence should arise to the contrary, evidence which we can scarcely expect will arise, we seem compelled to rest in the general conclusion, that the SEPARABILITY OF BAPTISM AND REGENERATION must be admitted as a *sound* and *orthodox* doctrine, while the *inseparability of baptism and regeneration* must be rejected as palpably UNSOUND AND UNORTHODOX.

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